



Witch

Will Irma Taranee Cornelia Hay Lin

Part V
The Book of Elements
Volume 2



THE GRAPHIC NOVEL



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Dancing to a Different Tune

"There's nothing better than everyone
being happy together..."



THE DAWN
OF A NEW
DAY.



BIP
BIP
BIP
BIP

DRINK

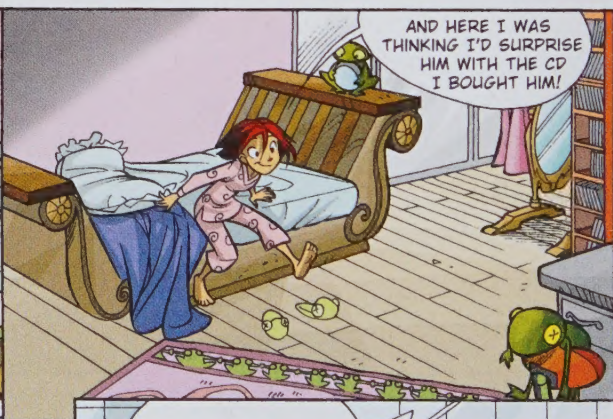
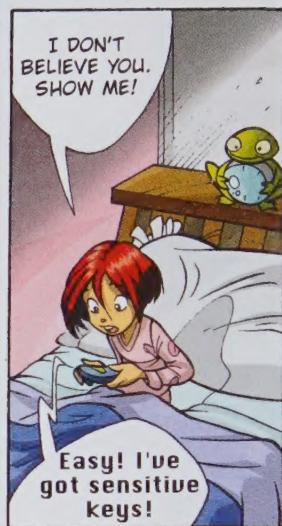
BUT NOT
JUST ANY
DAY.



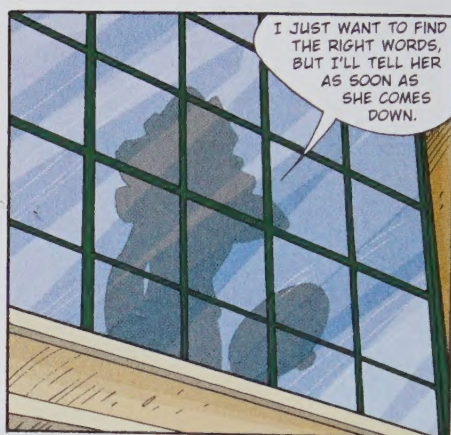
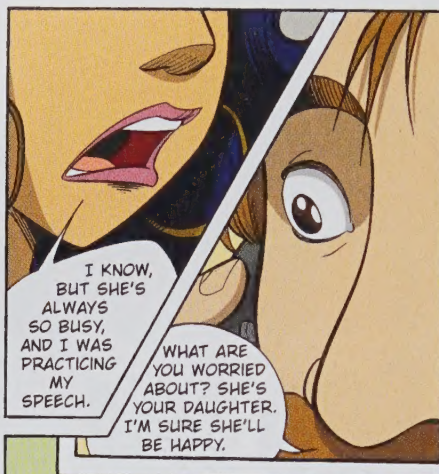
PLEASE
SHUT UP!

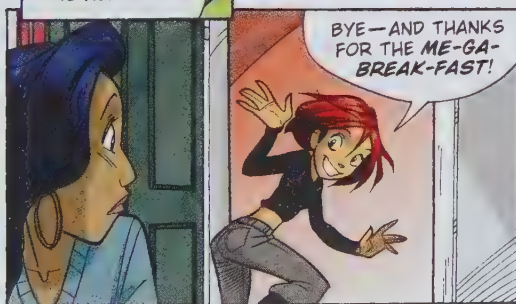
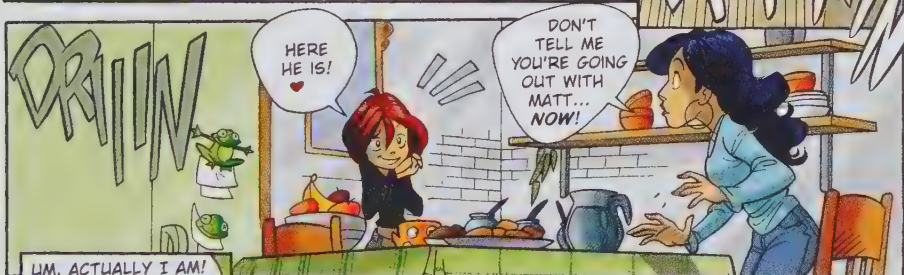
You have
a new
message.

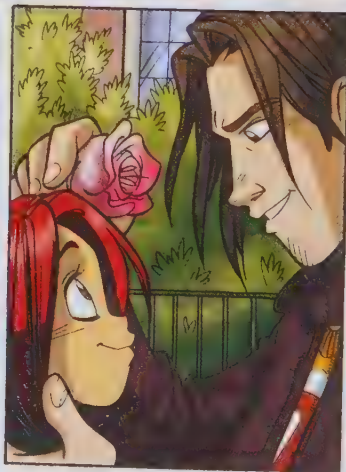
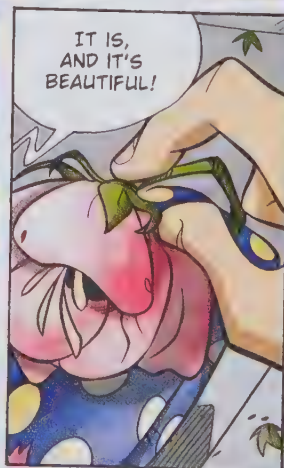
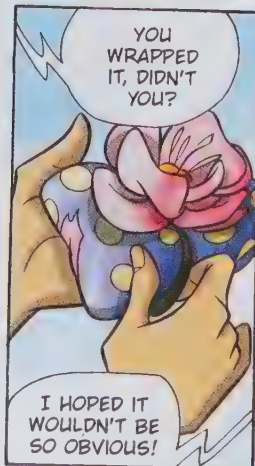
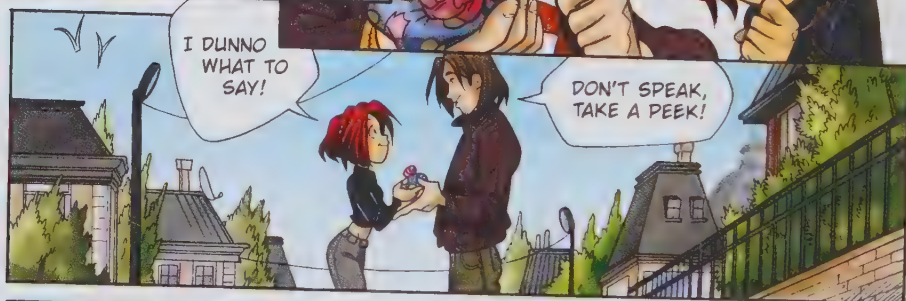
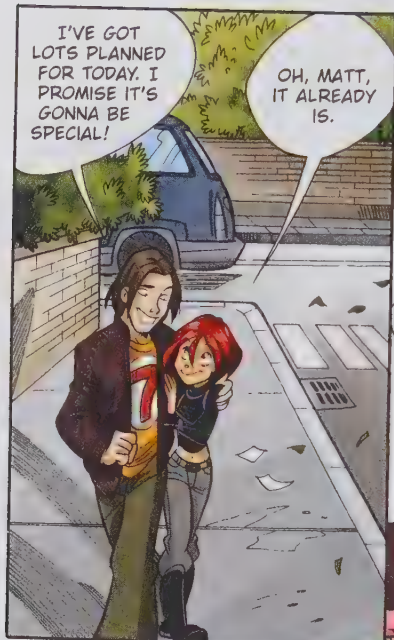




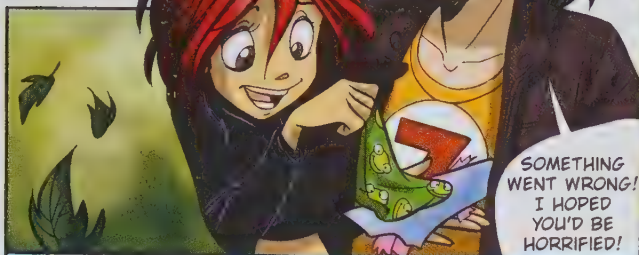








A FROG-
PATTERN
BANDANNA!
I LOVE
FROGS AND
BANDANNAS!



SOMETHING
WENT WRONG!
I HOPED
YOU'D BE
HORRIFIED!

LIKE
THIS!

TRUST ME!
IT'S A
SURPRISE.

WHY?

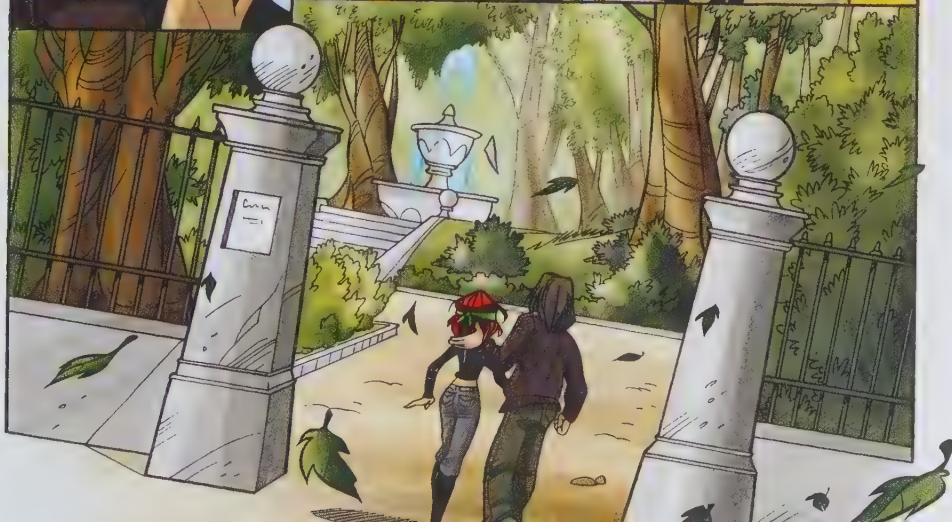
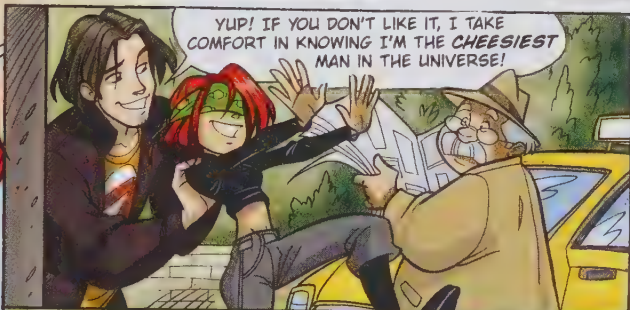


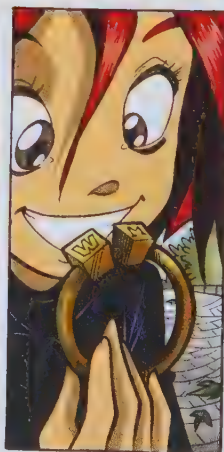
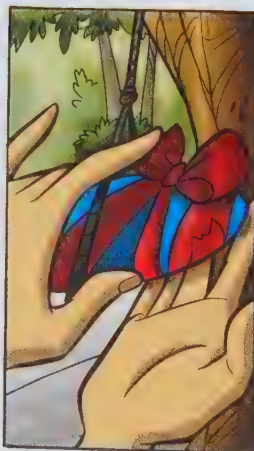
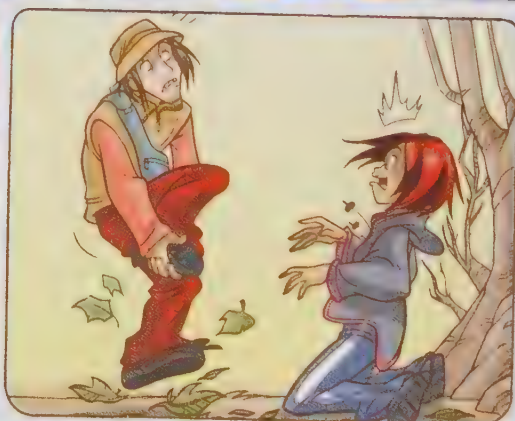
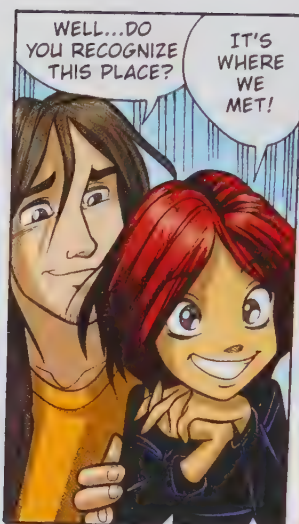
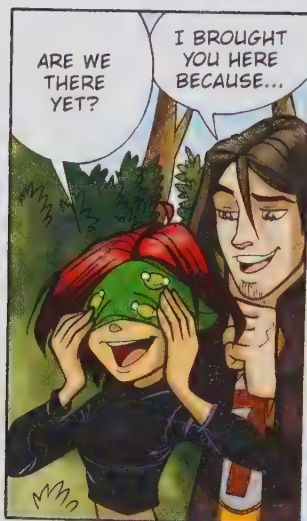
WAIT...
NOT LIKE
THAT.



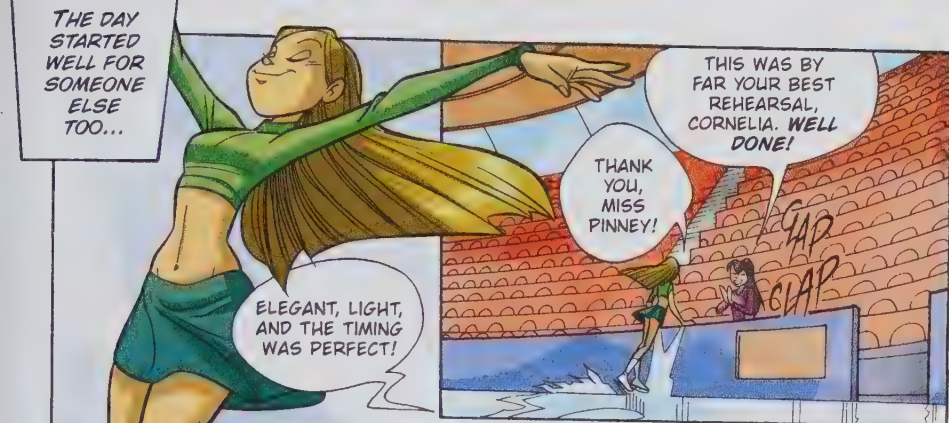
ANOTHER
ONE?

YUP! IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, I TAKE
COMFORT IN KNOWING I'M THE **CHEESIEST**
MAN IN THE UNIVERSE!

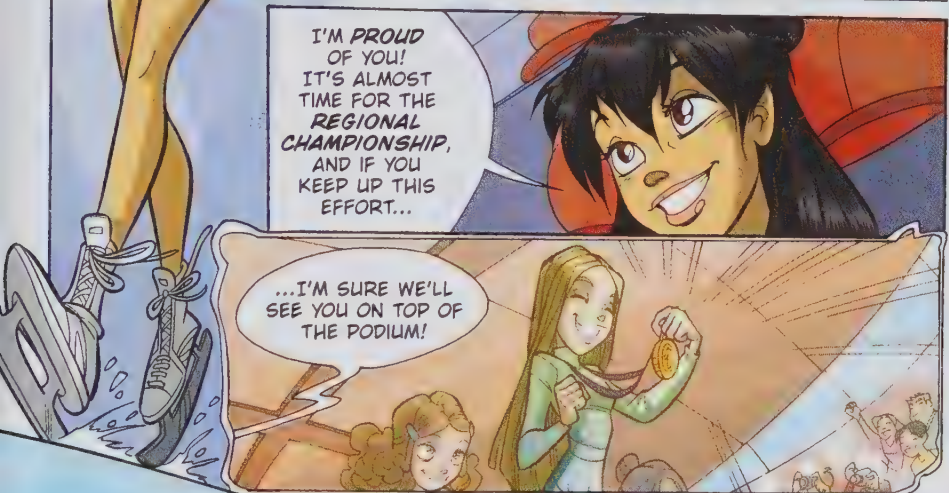




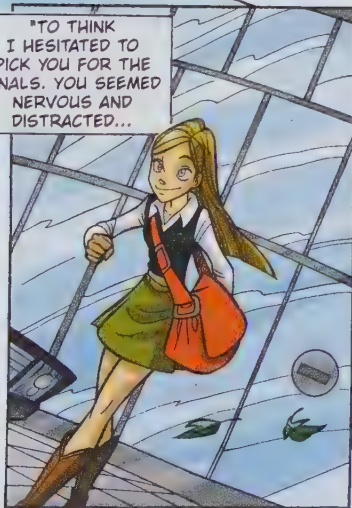
THE DAY
STARTED
WELL FOR
SOMEONE
ELSE
TOO...



I'M PROUD
OF YOU!
IT'S ALMOST
TIME FOR THE
REGIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP,
AND IF YOU
KEEP UP THIS
EFFORT...



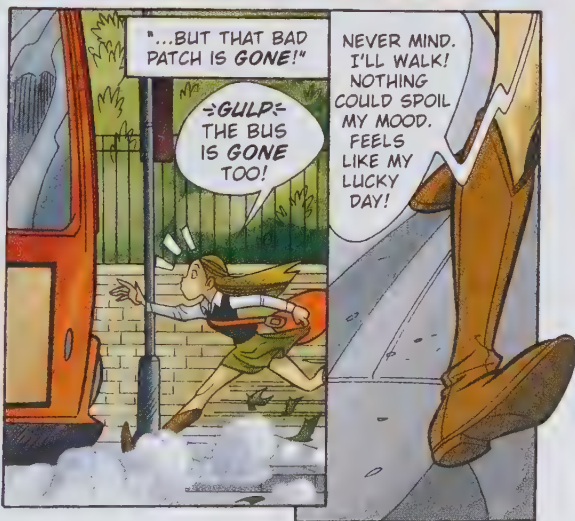
"TO THINK
I HESITATED
TO PICK YOU FOR THE
FINALS. YOU SEEMED
NERVOUS AND
DISTRACTED..."



"...BUT THAT BAD
PATCH IS GONE!"

÷GULP÷
THE BUS
IS GONE
TOO!

NEVER MIND.
I'LL WALK!
NOTHING
COULD SPOIL
MY MOOD.
FEELS
LIKE MY
LUCKY
DAY!



RO-FOOT

PETER! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

HI, CORNELIA! CAN I GIVE YOU A LIFT?

I'M HELPING THE GUYS WITH THEIR INSTRUMENTS... I'M THEIR ONLY BUDDY WITH A CAR!

THEY'VE GOT A GIG?

I THOUGHT YOU KNEW! TONIGHT AT THE ROCK-AND-ROLL CAFE! THE LONG AWAITED HAPPY HOUR + LIVE MUSIC AND COBALT BLUE ARE PLAYING. THEY'VE BEEN REHEARSING FOR WEEKS!

REALLY? WILL DIDN'T MENTION IT. STRANGE...

WELL, SHE MUST'VE HAD HER REASONS.

AFTER ALL, WE'VE ALL GOT OUR SECRETS ...

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. YOU STILL WONDER WHY I DIDN'T SHOW UP AT THE BEACH PARTY...

THE THING IS... I DON'T EVEN KNOW!

"IT WAS SUCH A PLEASANT SURPRISE WHEN YOU CAME TO GIVE ME THE INVITATION..."

"...BUT THEN I MANAGED TO RUIN EVERYTHING!"

*AS SEEN IN CHAPTER 47

"TO START, YOU OFFERED TO PICK ME UP, BUT I MADE UP AN EXCUSE TO COME BY MYSELF.

OH, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU PREFER. SEE YOU THERE, THEN!

"THAT AFTERNOON, GRANDMA CAME BY, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO LISTEN TO HER LINKIND COMMENTS ABOUT YOU.

...WITH THAT SCRUFFY LOOK! OUR DAAAARLING CORNELIA SHOULD HANG OUT WITH BOYS WORTHY OF HER, DON'T YOU THINK?

"SO I CAME TO THE PARTY. YOU DIDN'T SEE ME. YOU WERE JOKING AND LAUGHING WITH YOUR FRIENDS..."

"...AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME...I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE FACING THE SITUATION. I WAS AFRAID!

"AFRAID OF NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH... OF LOOKING SILLY... AFRAID OF EVERYTHING! I FELT SO INSECURE AND OUT OF PLACE..."

"SO I DECIDED TO LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING HI."



AND YOU CALLED ME
TO SAY YOU WERE
HOME SICK.

TOO BAD THE
NUMBER ON
THE SCREEN
WASN'T
FROM YOUR
HOUSE!



I NEVER DID
ASK YOU...



PETER, I
WANTED TO ASK...

...SORRY!

NO.
I'M SORRY.
YOU WERE
SAYING?



UHM...NOTHING
IMPORTANT.
BUT YOU
WANTED...

...TO
KNOW
WHERE
TO TAKE
YOU. HOME,
I GUESS?

NO.
I'M GOING
TO SEE
HAY LIN AT
THE SILVER
DRAGON,
THANKS.



YEAH...I
HEARD ABOUT
ERIC.

MUST BE HARD TO
BE SO FAR APART
WHEN YOU CARE
ABOUT EACH
OTHER...

BUT
SOMETIMES
BEING CLOSE
CAN BE EVEN
HARDER...

LOTS OF PEOPLE
ARE BETTER THAN
ME, AND THERE'S
ONE STEP I CAN'T
GET RIGHT...

I MEAN...
IT SEEMED WAY
EASIER AT FIRST...
I'M TRYING TO LEARN
ALL THE STEPS, BUT
HIP-HOP CAN BE SO
COMPLICATED!

YOU'LL GET
IT...WHAT
DO WE DO
TODAY?

I HAVE
TO PRACTICE.
I WANT TO
MANAGE
TO DO THE
WINDMILL.

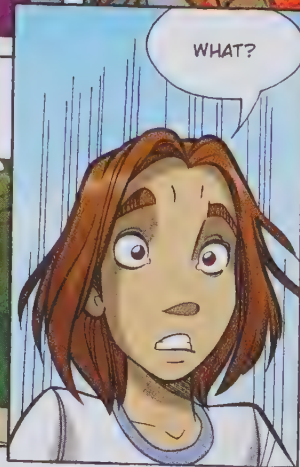
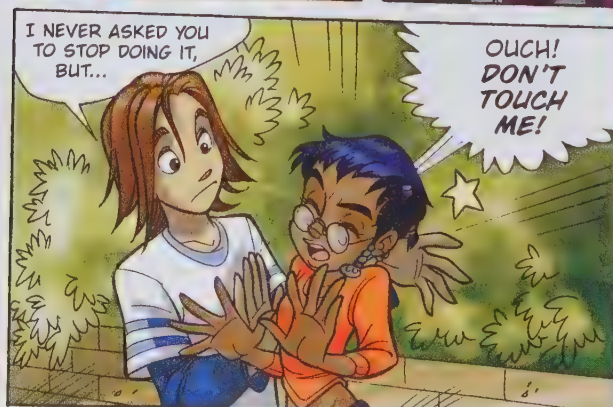
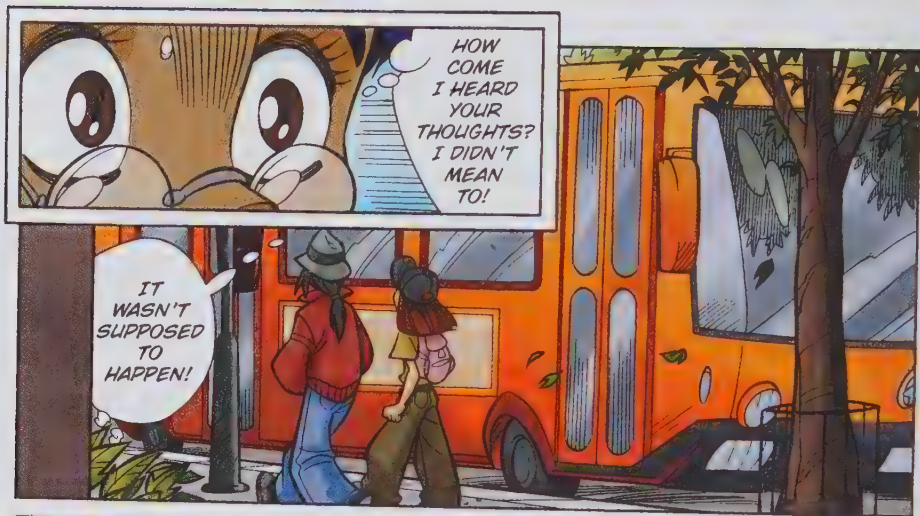
THE
LAST TIME
I TRIED WAS
A DISASTER.

I FELL
AND HAD TO
GIVE UP.

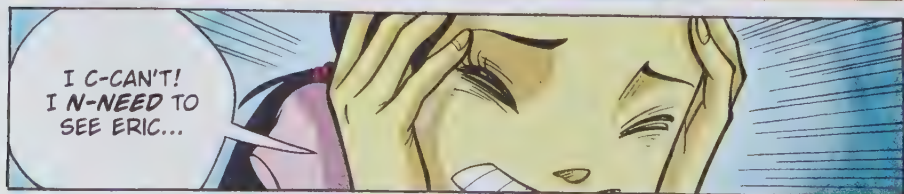
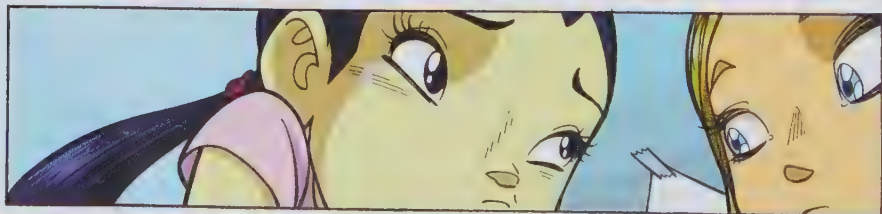
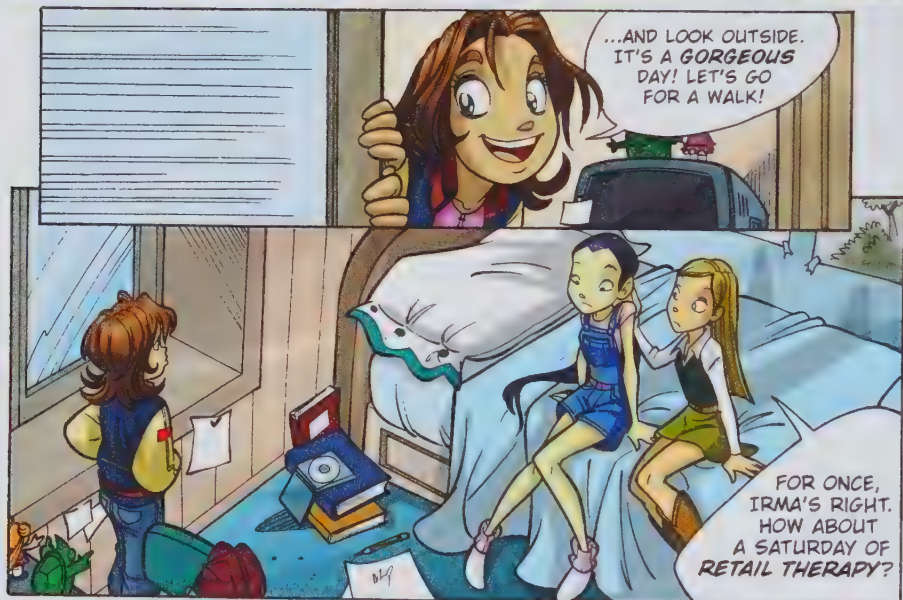
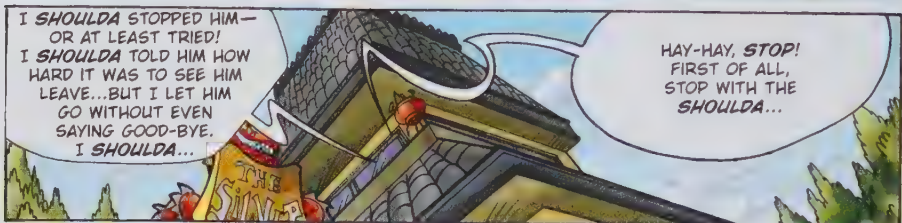
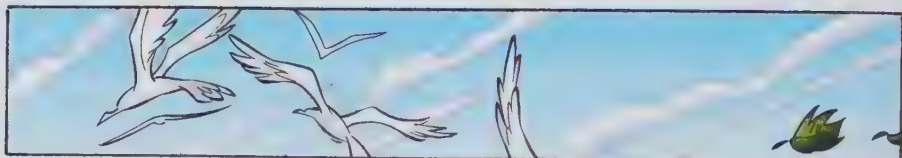
WHEN
WILL YOU
BE DONE?

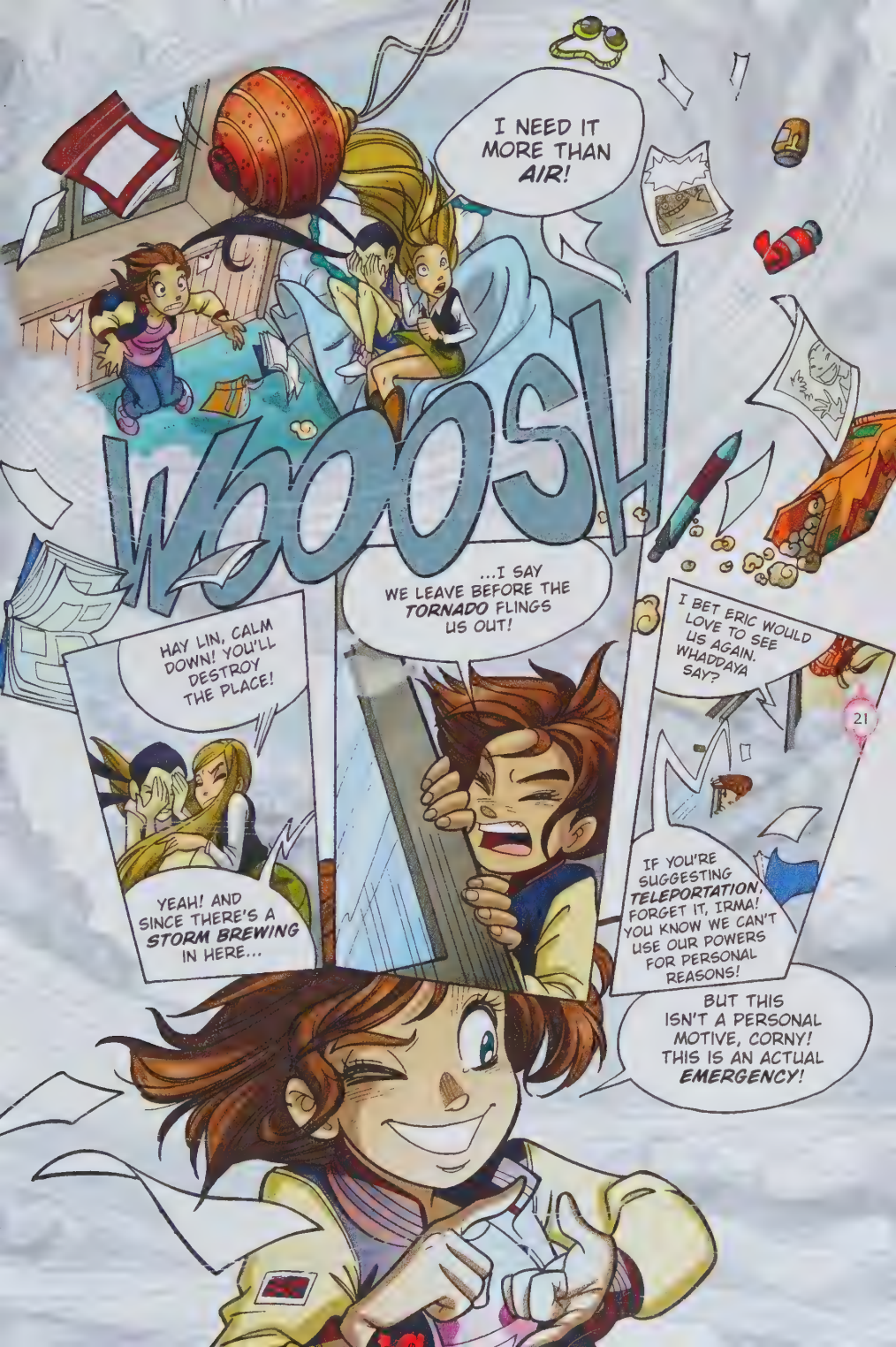
I DON'T
KNOW. SOME
CLASSMATES
ARE GOING TO
HELP ME.
THEY'RE REALLY
GOOD, AND IF I
WORK HARD...

OOF! ♡
THAT'S ALL SHE
CAN THINK
ABOUT!









I NEED IT
MORE THAN
AIR!

Whoosh!

...I SAY
WE LEAVE BEFORE THE
TORNADO FLINGS
US OUT!

HAY LIN, CALM
DOWN! YOU'LL
DESTROY
THE PLACE!

YEAH! AND
SINCE THERE'S A
STORM BREWING
IN HERE...

I BET ERIC WOULD
LOVE TO SEE
US AGAIN.
WHADDAYA
SAY?

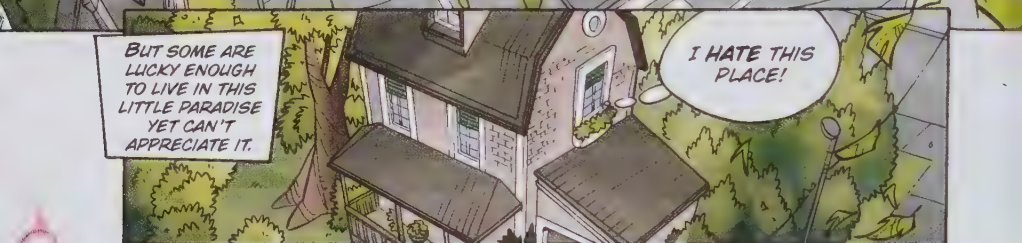
IF YOU'RE
SUGGESTING
TELEPORTATION,
FORGET IT, IRMA!
YOU KNOW WE CAN'T
USE OUR POWERS
FOR PERSONAL
REASONS!

BUT THIS
ISN'T A PERSONAL
MOTIVE, CORNY!
THIS IS AN ACTUAL
EMERGENCY!



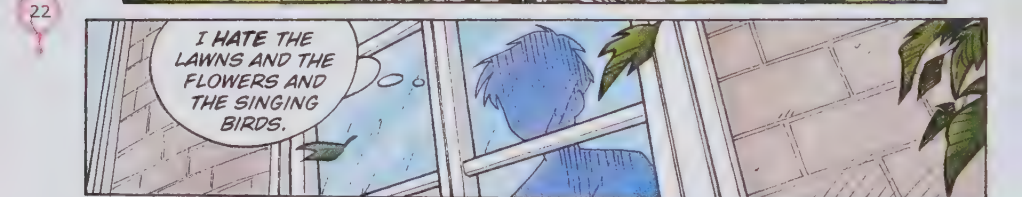
OPEN HILL. A FEW
HUNDRED MILES
FROM HEATHERFIELD.
A QUIET COUNTRY
TOWN SURROUNDED
BY PEACEFUL HILLS.

MANY PEOPLE WISH
THEY COULD SPEND AT
LEAST ONE RELAXING
WEEKEND HERE.

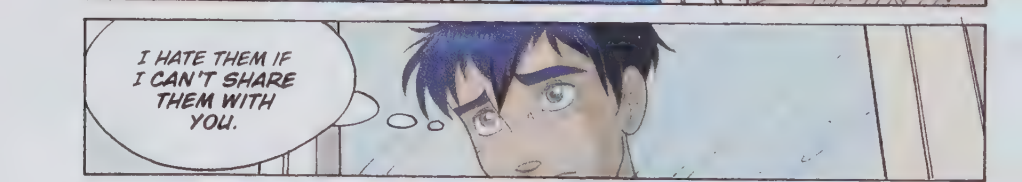


BUT SOME ARE
LUCKY ENOUGH
TO LIVE IN THIS
LITTLE PARADISE
YET CAN'T
APPRECIATE IT.

I HATE THIS
PLACE!



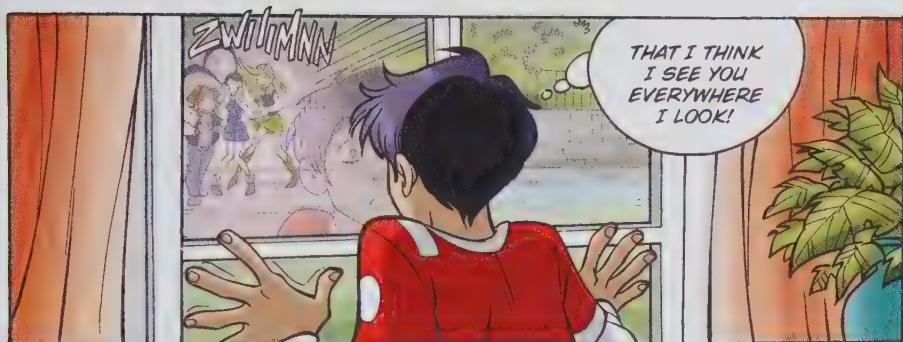
I HATE THE
LAWNS AND THE
FLOWERS AND
THE SINGING
BIRDS.



I HATE THEM IF
I CAN'T SHARE
THEM WITH
YOU.



I MISS YOU,
HAY LIN!
I MISS YOU
SO MUCH
THAT...



THAT I THINK
I SEE YOU
EVERYWHERE
I LOOK!

SO...
THIS IS
ERIC'S NEW
HOUSE?

NOT
TOO
SHABBY!

UH-OH, IRMA.
YOU SPOKE
TOO SOON,
AS USUAL!

WHAT'S
UP?

UNLESS
I'M SEEING
THINGS,
THAT'S
REALLY
HAY LIN,
WITH IRMA
AND
CORNELIA!

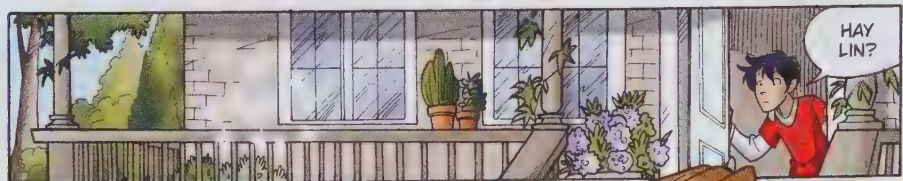
SEE?
THAT WASN'T
SO
HARD,
WAS
IT?

I D-DUNNO...WE'RE
DISAPPEAR—

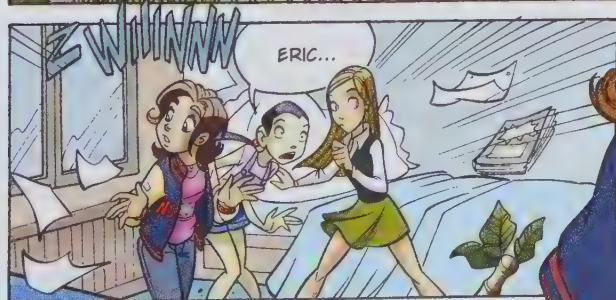
SOMETHING'S
WRONG! THIS
NEVER HAPPENED
BEFORE!

HAY LIN!

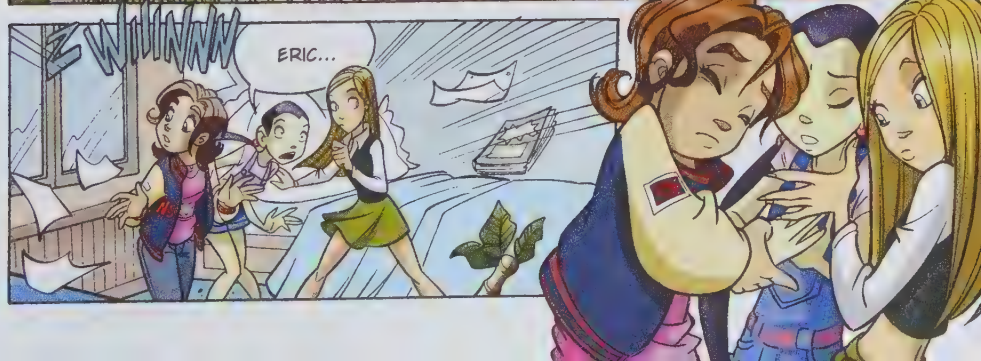
23



HAY
LIN?



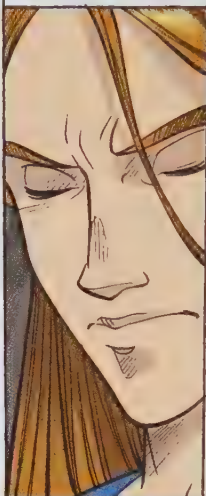
ERIC...



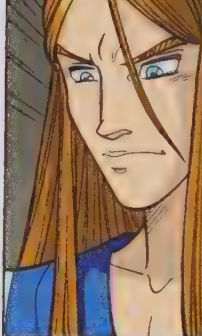
SOME THINGS LEAVE US **SPEECHLESS**. IN THE BASEMENT OF HIS BOOKSHOP, CEDRIC KNOWS WHAT THAT'S LIKE.



HE CAN'T WRAP HIS HEAD AROUND THE CHAT HE HAD WITH THE MYSTERIOUS BOOK THAT CAN SPEAK METAMOOR'S LANGUAGE.

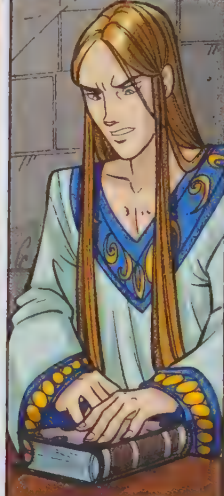


CEDRIC HAS BEEN STRIPPED OF HIS POWERS, BUT HE CAN STILL SENSE MAGIC.

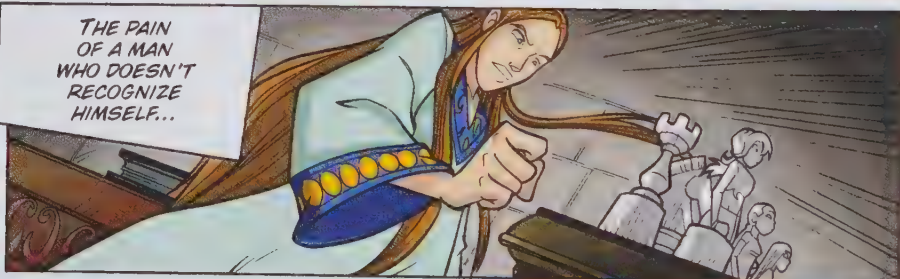


UNLIKE ALL THE FAKE BOOKS HE'S FOUND, HE KNOWS FOR SURE THAT THIS ONE IS SPECIAL AND VERY POWERFUL.

HE'S STARTING TO HOPE THAT THE BOOK MIGHT ACTUALLY HELP HIM. IT COULD READ HIS THOUGHTS, GIVE A NAME TO HIS PAIN....



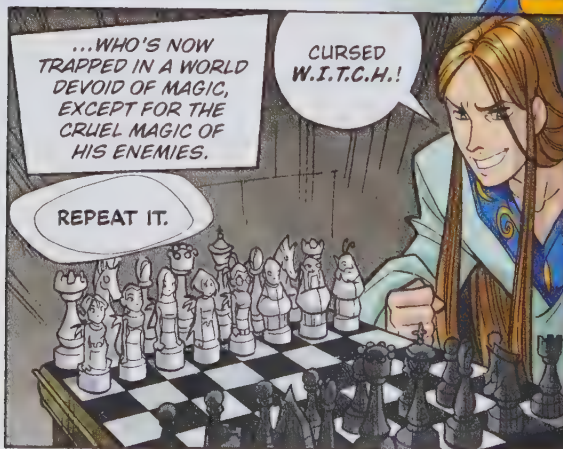
THE PAIN OF A MAN WHO DOESN'T RECOGNIZE HIMSELF...



...WHO'S NOW TRAPPED IN A WORLD DEVOID OF MAGIC, EXCEPT FOR THE CRUEL MAGIC OF HIS ENEMIES.

CURSED W.I.T.C.H.!

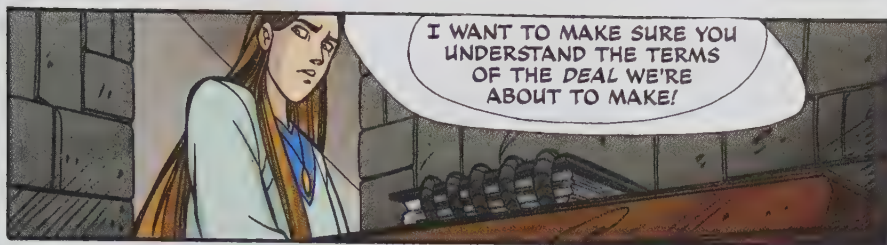
REPEAT IT.



HUH?

REPEAT WHAT I TOLD YOU!



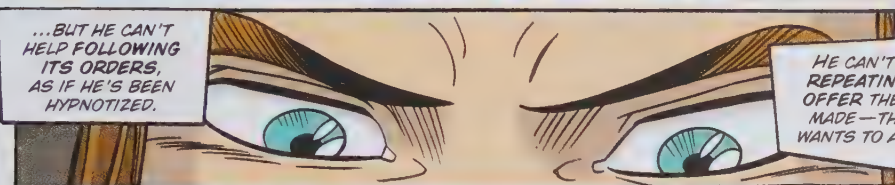


I WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE TERMS OF THE DEAL WE'RE ABOUT TO MAKE!



THAT FIRM VOICE, THAT COMMANDING TONE, THAT SUPERIOR MANNER...

CEDRIC IS ANNOYED BY THE MYSTERIOUS BOOK'S ATTITUDE...



...BUT HE CAN'T HELP FOLLOWING ITS ORDERS, AS IF HE'S BEEN HYPNOTIZED.

HE CAN'T HELP REPEATING THE OFFER THE BOOK MADE—THAT HE WANTS TO ACCEPT!

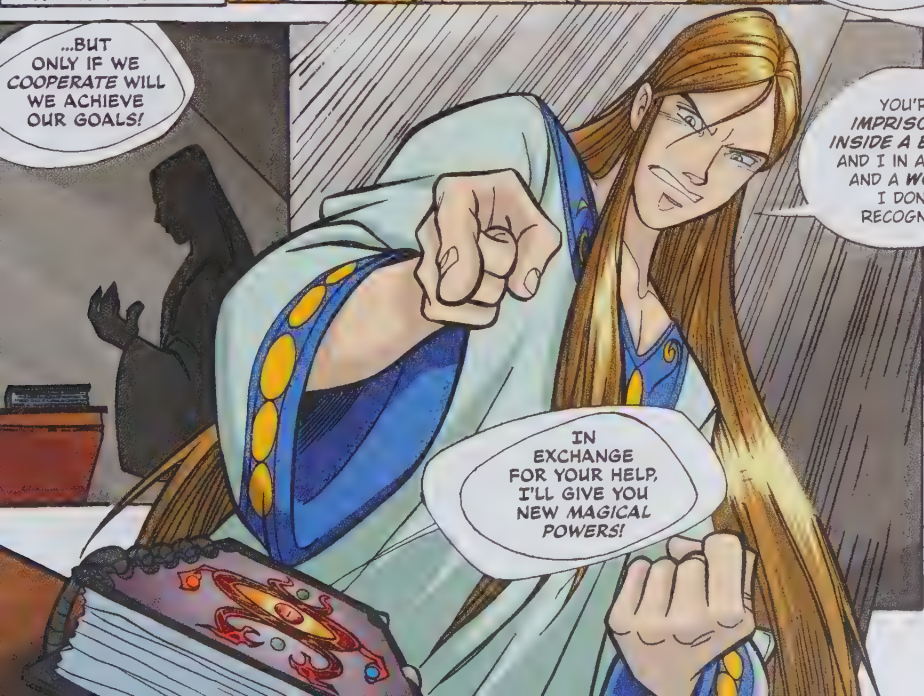


THE CREATURE TRAPPED IN THE BOOK WANTS TO BE FREED ON METAMOOR, CEDRIC'S WORLD.

WE'RE COMPATRIOTS!

WE'RE TWO SOULS SHARING THE SAME HATRED AND DESIRE FOR REVENGE...

25



...BUT ONLY IF WE COOPERATE WILL WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS!

YOU'RE IMPRISONED INSIDE A BOOK... AND I IN A BODY AND A WORLD I DON'T RECOGNIZE.

IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR HELP, I'LL GIVE YOU NEW MAGICAL POWERS!

AND IN ORDER
TO SET YOU
FREE...

YOU MUST
FIND THE FIVE
MAGIC GEMS TO
PLACE IN THE
SLOTS ON MY
COVER.

THE GEMS THAT
CONTAIN THE *GOOD SIDE*
OF THE ELEMENTS, HIDDEN
IN FIVE DIFFERENT
LOCATIONS AROUND
HEATHERFIELD.

PRECISELY!
BUT BE CAREFUL.
ONLY *ELEMENTAL*
CREATURES
CAN...

...FIGHT
THE
TERRIBLE
CUSTODIANS
GUARDING THE
SYMBOLS AND
RETRIEVE THE
GEMS.
I KNOW!

26

SO FIRST
YOU'LL HAVE
TO FIND WORTHY
ASSISTANTS
FOR SUCH
A TASK.

YOU HAVE
ALL THE
INFORMATION
YOU NEED.
I HAVE
NOTHING
TO ADD.

WRONG! WE MUST
DISCUSS MY
REWARD NOW.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL
HAPPEN ONCE THE
COVER OPENS? HOW
WILL YOU RESTORE
MY POWERS?
AND WHEN?

AAAAH!

WITH EACH
GEM YOU INSERT,
ONE OF THE LOCKS
ON MY COVER WILL
OPEN, BRINGING
ME CLOSER TO
FREEDOM!

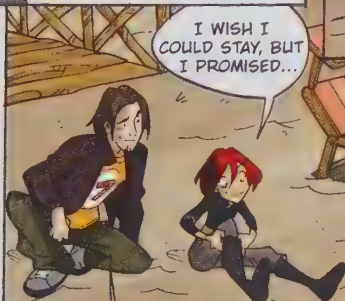
QUIET! YOU'LL
KNOW IN DUE TIME.
WE'LL ACT TOGETHER
TO SLAKE YOUR
THIRST FOR REVENGE...

"...AND MY HUNGER
FOR FREEDOM!"



UH-OH!
MY STOMACH'S
GRUMBLING!

I WISH I
COULD STAY, BUT
I PROMISED...



NO WORRIES. I
NEED SOME TIME THIS
AFTERNOON TOO TO
SORT OUT...UM...
SOME STUFF!

I SAY YOU GAVE
ME THE BEST
MONTH-VERSARY
EVER, MATT!

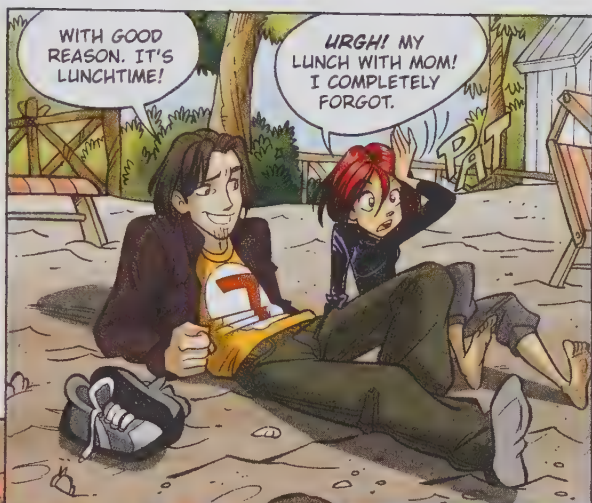


HEH-HEH...
THE BEST IS
YET TO COME,
BABY!

YOU BET!
LATERS!



SEE YOU AT SIX
OUTSIDE THE BOOK-
SHOP DOWNTOWN,
OKAY?

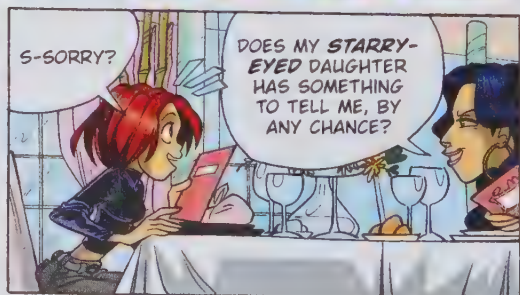
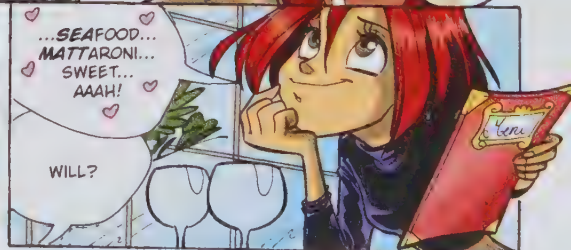
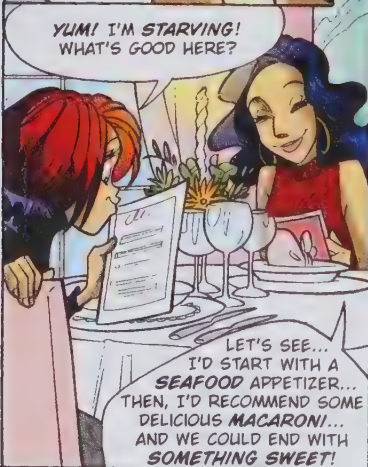
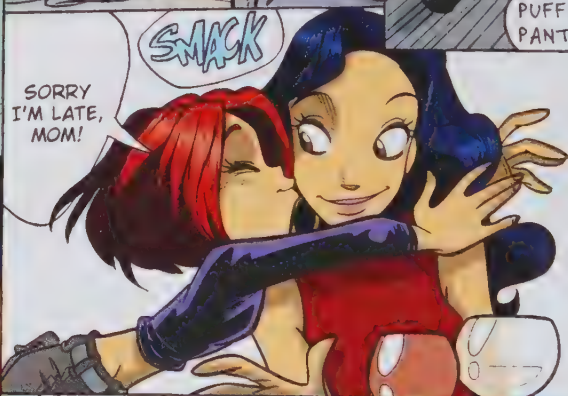
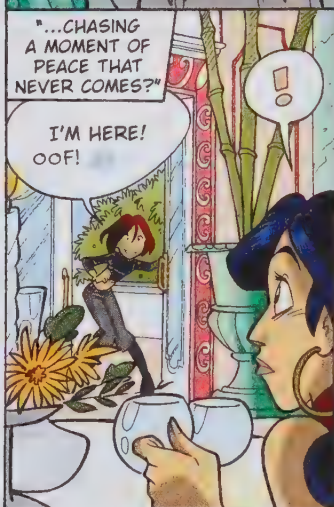


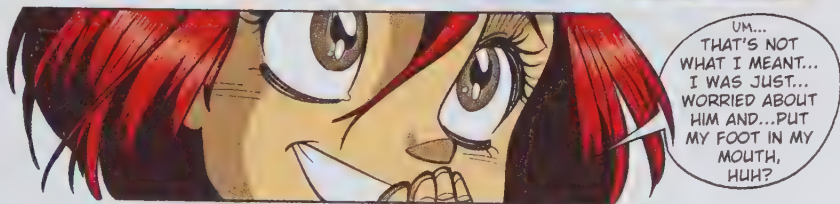
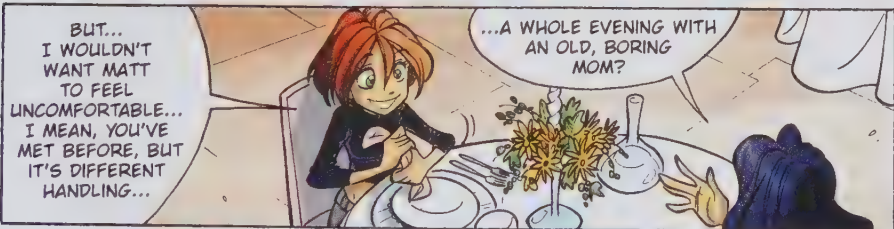
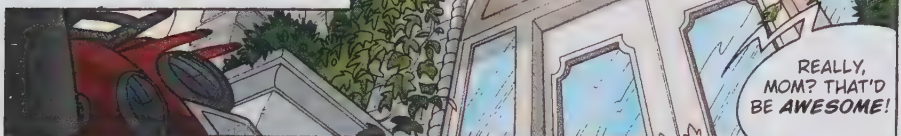
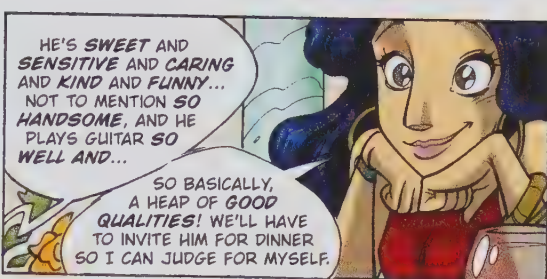
WITH GOOD
REASON. IT'S
LUNCHTIME!

URGH! MY
LUNCH WITH MOM!
I COMPLETELY
FORGOT.

WE CAN MEET
UP TONIGHT.
WHADDAYA SAY?

I SAY
THAT'S
PERFECT.
THE WHOLE
DAY IS
PERFECT
!!





YOU KNOW, HONEY, **TWO THINGS** MAKE A MOM REALLY HAPPY: KNOWING THAT HER DAUGHTER IS HAPPY...

...AND BEING ABLE TO **SHARE** THAT **HAPPINESS** WITH HER!

YOU TELLING ME ABOUT YOURSELF, **SHARING** YOUR JOY WITH ME, MEANS A LOT TO ME. MAYBE IT'S HARD TO UNDERSTAND, BUT...

IT'S NOT, MOM!

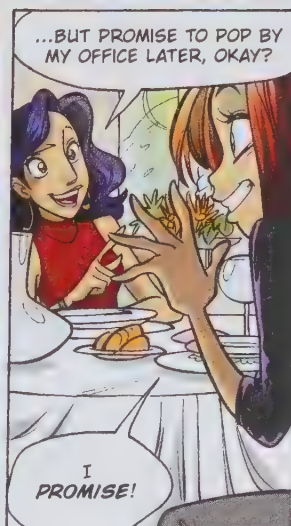
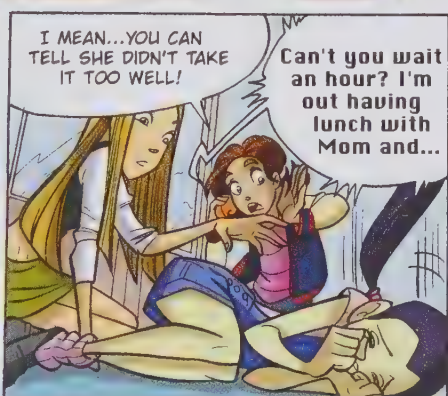
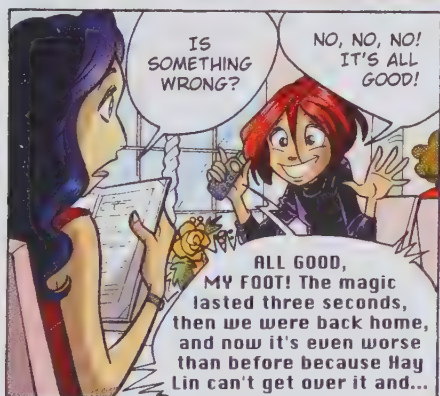
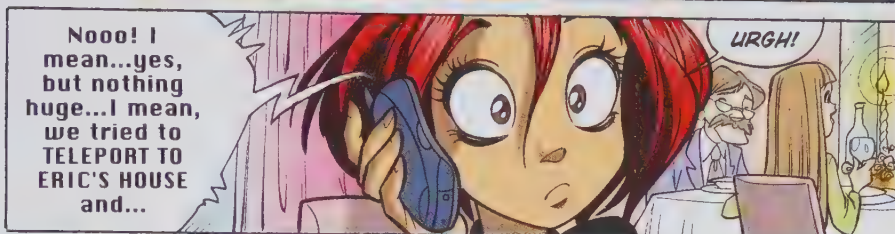
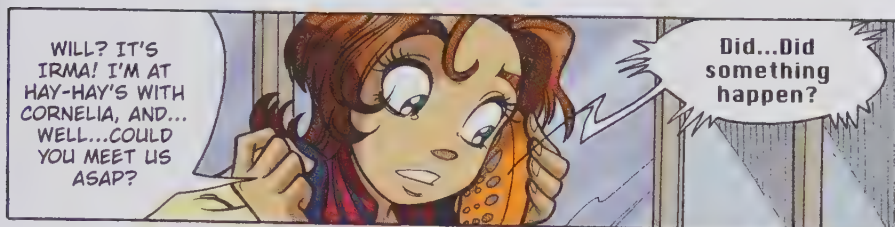
I'M HAPPY TO HEAR WHEN YOU HAVE GOOD NEWS TOO, LIKE WHEN YOUR BOSS GIVES YOU A RAISE OR EXTRA VACATION! I LOVE HAVING SOMETHING TO **CELEBRATE TOGETHER**.

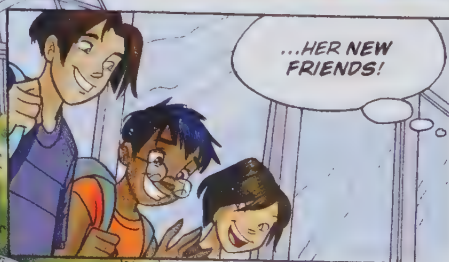
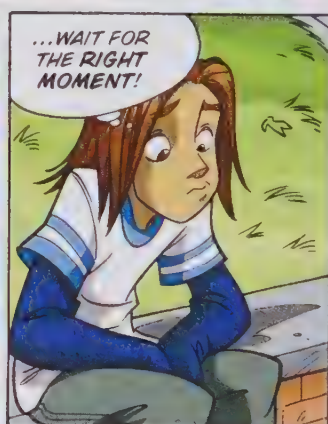
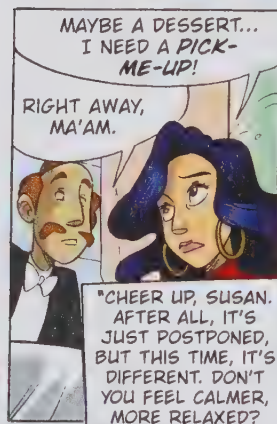
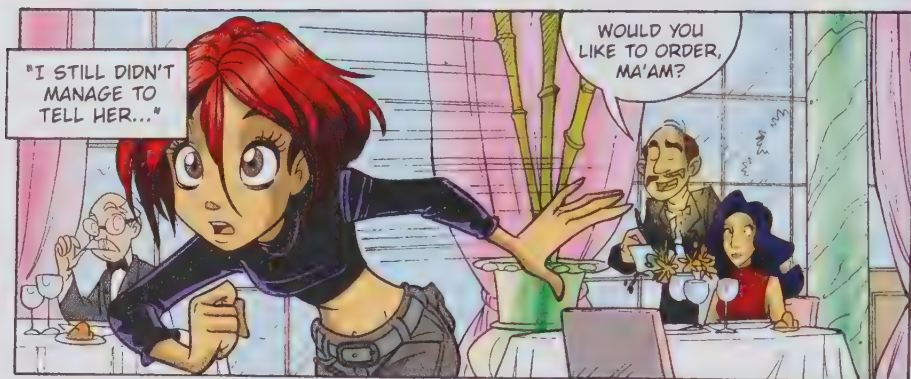
WELL...SPEAKING OF WHICH, WILL, I WANTED TO TELL YOU...

WHOOOPS...
HANG ON
A SEC!

**BREEEP
BREEEP**

**BREEEP
BREEEP**



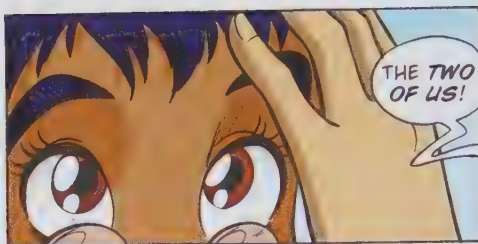






HAPPY HOUR +
LIVE MUSIC AT
THE ROCK-AND-
ROLL CAFE! I
HEARD ABOUT
IT FROM
PETER...

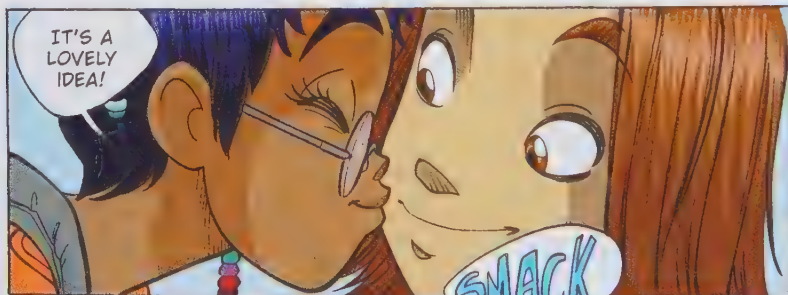
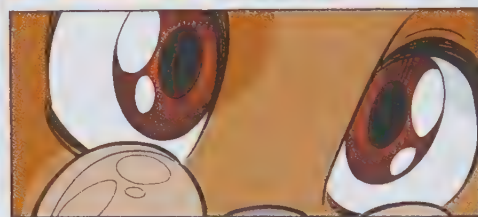
THEY'RE FOR
TONIGHT! COBALT
BLUE ARE PLAYING,
AND I THOUGHT WE
COULD SPEND A
NICE EVENING...



THE TWO
OF US!



SO YOU CAN FINALLY
SHOW ME SOME OF
YOUR DANCE
MOVES!



IT'S A
LOVELY
IDEA!

SMACK



THANK YOU!
I CAN'T WAIT. I
HAVE SO MUCH
TO TELL YOU!



I FINALLY
MANAGED
TO DO THAT
HIP-HOP STEP
I COULDN'T GET
RIGHT—ALL
THANKS TO LUKE
AND SHEILA.
THEY'RE GREAT AT
IT! THEY TOLD ME
IT'S ALL ABOUT
BALANCE,
BECAUSE...

THAT'S ONE CRISIS
AVERTED...

Witch

Will

Irina

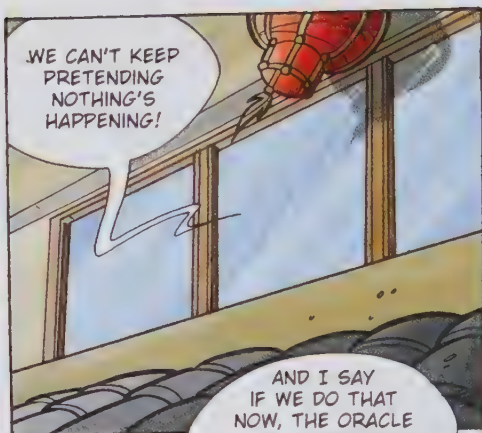
Tarance

Cornelia

May Lin

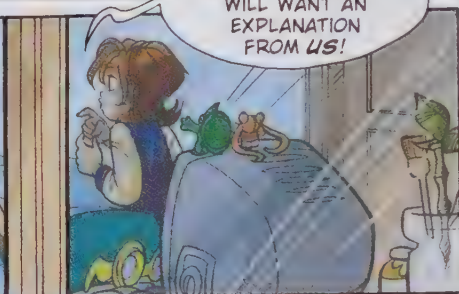
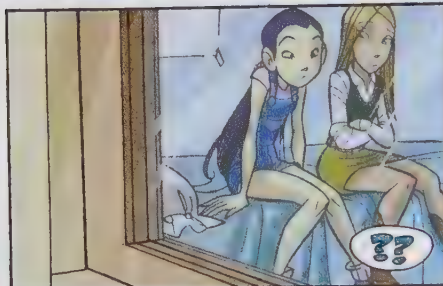


I SAY WE
GO TO **KANDRAKAR**
AND ASK FOR AN
EXPLANATION.



WE CAN'T KEEP
PRETENDING
NOTHING'S
HAPPENING!

AND I SAY
IF WE DO THAT
NOW, THE ORACLE
WILL WANT AN
EXPLANATION
FROM **US!**



WHY THAT LOOK?
HAVE YOU COUNTED
HOW MANY PEOPLE
ARE IN THIS
ROOM?

WILL'S ON HER WAY,
AND THE ONLY REASON
TARANEE ISN'T HERE
IS BECAUSE OF
DANCE CLASS.

PRECISELY.
SHE'S CLEARLY FOUND
SOMETHING THAT'S
MORE IMPORTANT
THAN **US...**

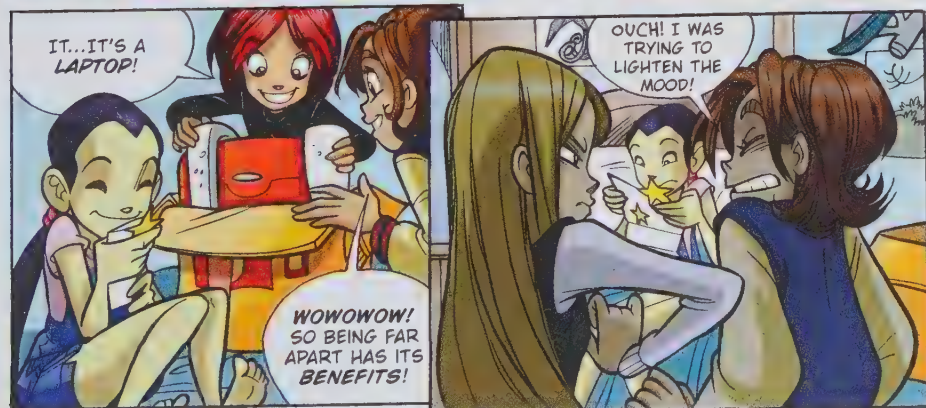
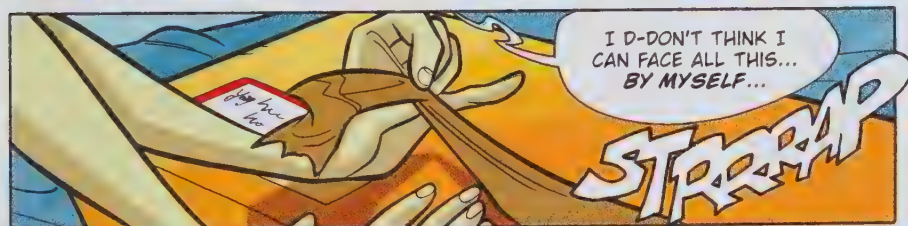
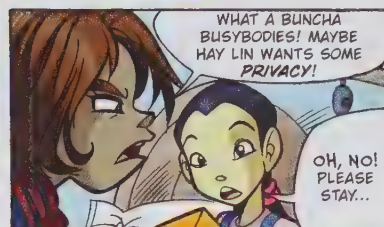
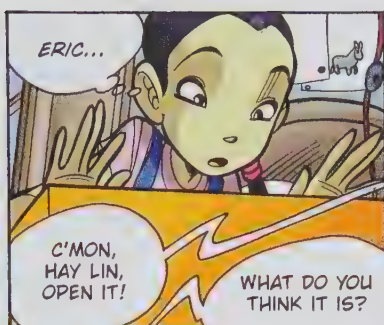
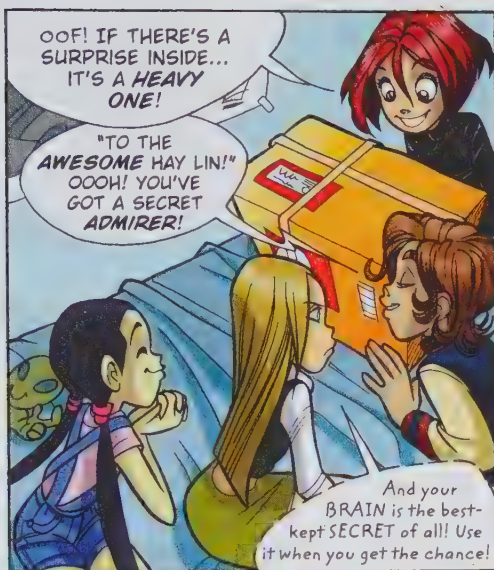


UM...SPEAKING OF
CARDBOARD...

THERE'S A
CARDBOARD BOX
HERE. THE
DELIVERY GUY
GAVE IT TO ME
DOWNSTAIRS.

OR **SOMEONE...**
SINCE SHE'S STARTED
HANGING OUT WITH
THAT **CARDBOARD**
CUT-OUT **JENSEN**
GIRL!





DEAR HAY LIN,
YOU DON'T
KNOW HOW
HARD IT IS
TO WRITE
YOU THIS
LETTER...

I'M ON THE PORCH OF
MY NEW HOUSE. IT'S A
CLEAR NIGHT, AND EVERY
NOW AND THEN, I LOOK
AT THE STARS...

"...AND WONDER IF
YOU'RE DOING THE SAME
RIGHT NOW FROM YOUR
BEDROOM WINDOW."

THE BRIGHTEST,
THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL.
HAY LIN...

*I see the same
constellations as
in Heatherfield's sky
but, as hard as I try,
there's one star
I can't find.*

Eric

"YOU GET IT,
RIGHT? THAT
STAR IS YOU!"

YOU'LL THINK I'M A
COWARD. I SHOULD
HAVE TOLD YOU IN
PERSON HOW MUCH
YOU MEAN TO ME.
WELL, YOU'RE
RIGHT.

"I ALSO WANTED TO TELL YOU HOW MUCH IT HURT TO LEAVE SO SUDDENLY, BUT I DIDN'T HAVE TIME AND **APOLOGIZE** FOR ONLY DOING IT NOW.

"I LIKE TO THINK I'VE SUBCONSCIOUSLY LEFT THINGS HANGING... SO I CAN COME BACK SOON AND PICK UP WHERE I LEFT OFF...

"...AND SEE YOUR **SMILING EYES** AGAIN AND TELL YOU WITHOUT HESITATION THAT...

...I CARE SO MUCH ABOUT YOU, HAY LIN!

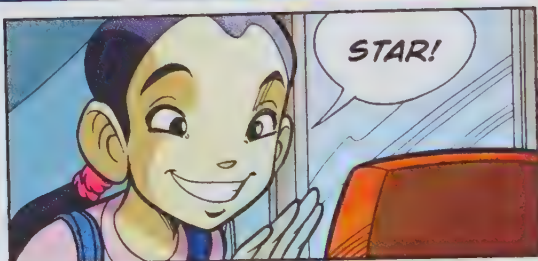
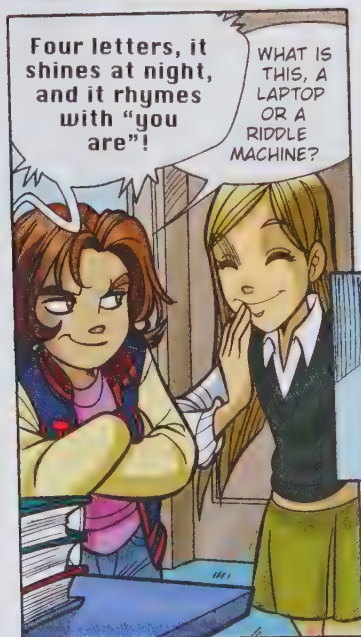
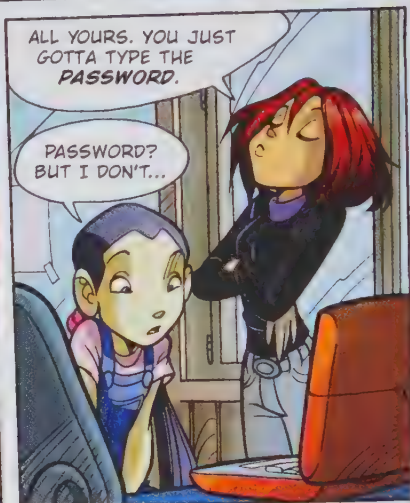
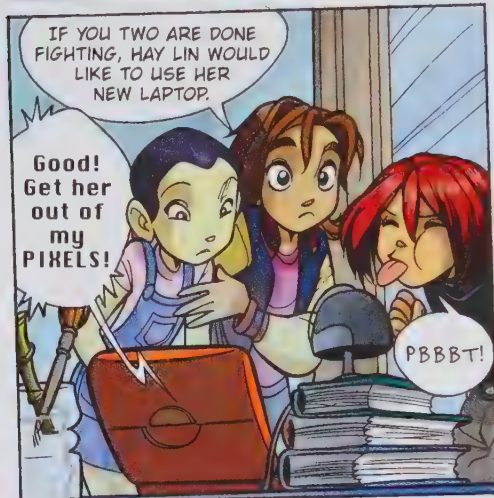
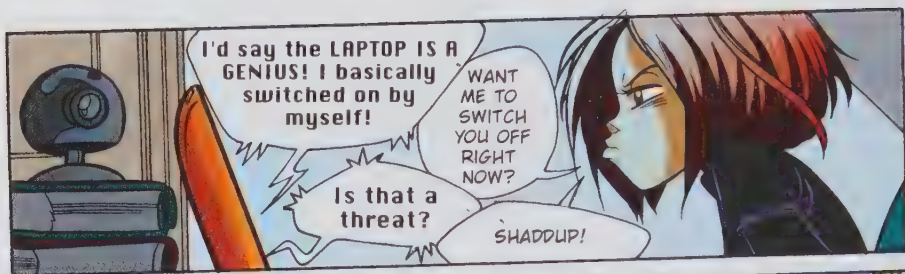
"OH, BY THE WAY, THE LAPTOP IN THE BOX IS MY MOM'S. SHE GAVE IT TO ME BECAUSE HERE IN OPEN HILL SHE CAN USE A COMPUTER AT UNIVERSITY.

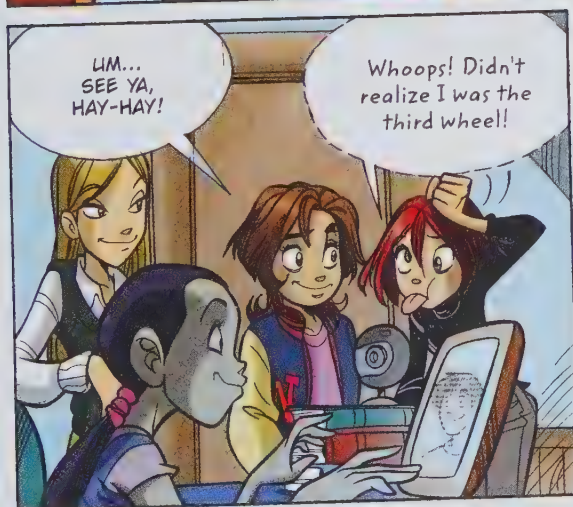
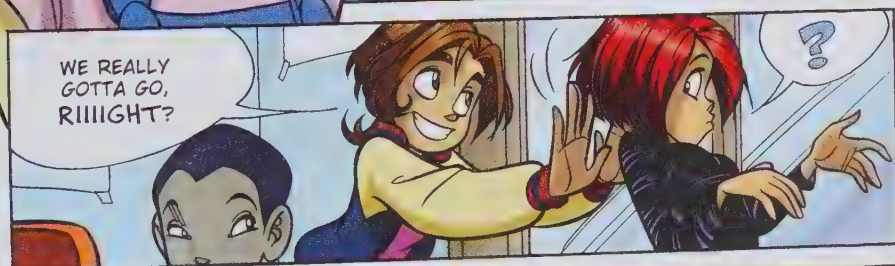
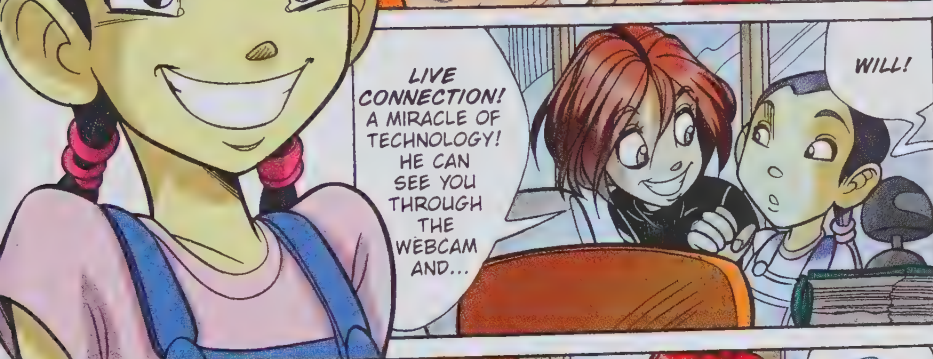
"...AND I THOUGHT I'D LEND IT TO YOU WHILE WE'RE APART. IT'LL BE EASIER TO KEEP IN..."

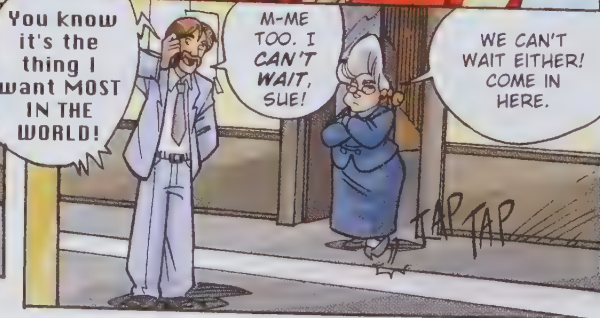
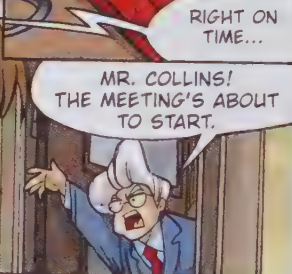
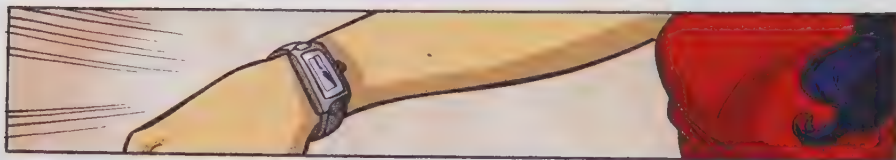
...CONTACT! CONNECTION ON AND WEBCAM WORKING!

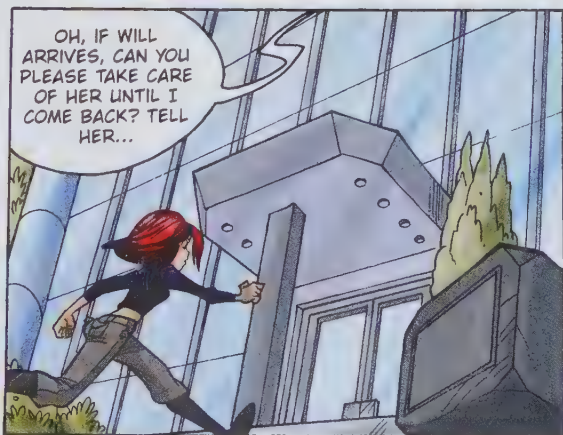
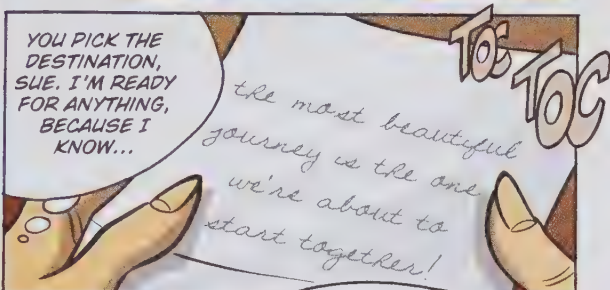
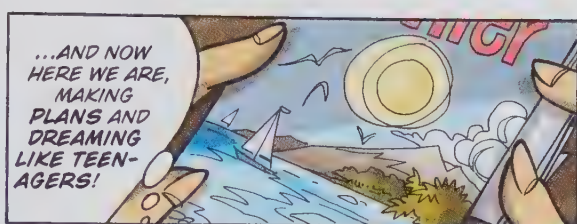
AM I A **COMPUTER GENIUS** OR WHAT?

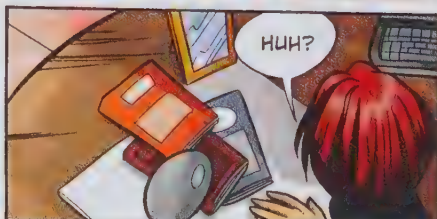
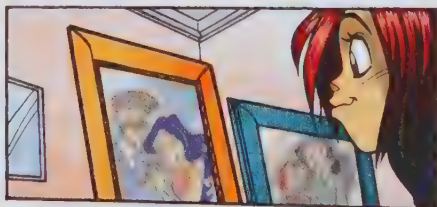
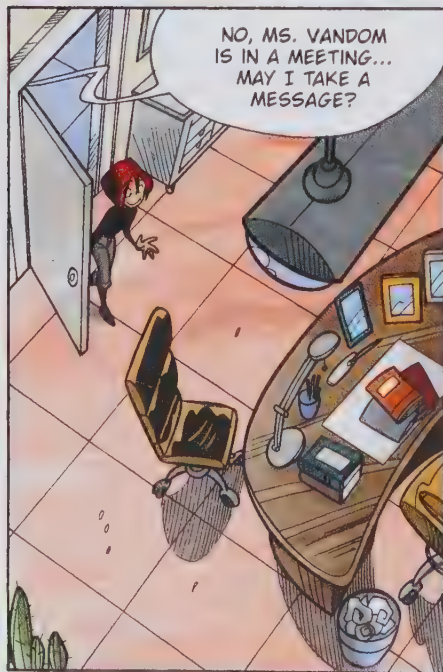
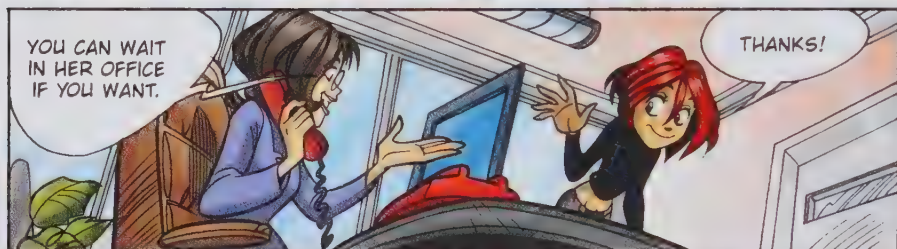
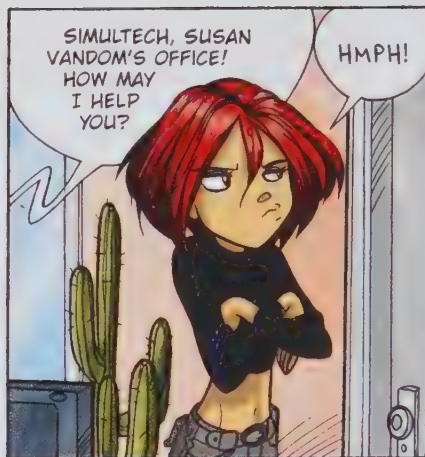
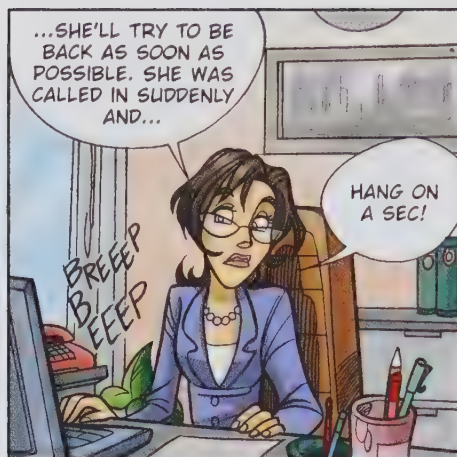
ON!











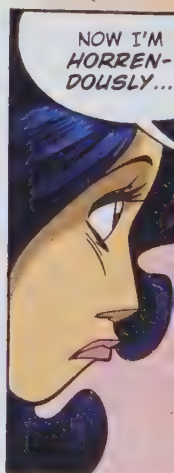
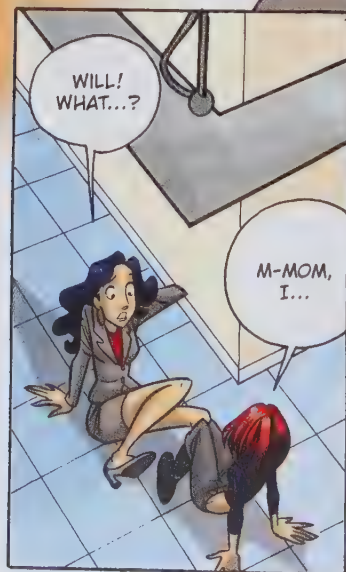
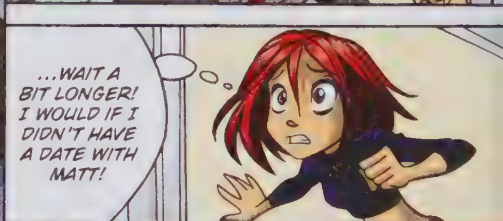
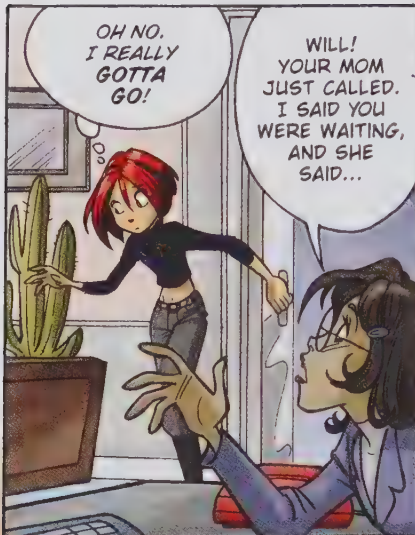
DREAM
HOLIDAY
IN THE
CARIBBEAN...
A CRUISE...
A TOUR
IN THE
DESERT...
WOW!

SO THAT'S
WHAT SHE
WAS TRYING
TO TELL ME!
**WOW...
MEGAWOW,
ULTRAWOW!**

POOR **STRESSED** MOM!
YOU WERE TRYING TO SAY
YOU NEED A HOLIDAY, AND
I DIDN'T EVEN LISTEN
TO YOU!

BUT I PROMISE I
WON'T GO UNTIL YOU
TELL ME EVERY-
THING—**WHEN** WE'RE
LEAVING, **WHERE**
WE'RE GOING, FOR
HOW LONG...

≡GULP≡
IT'S
ALREADY
HALF
PAST
FIVE!



...LATE!

FOUR DAYS LATE, AS
THEY'VE BEEN READY
SINCE TUESDAY.

I'M SORRY!
WHEN I ORDERED THEM,
I DIDN'T KNOW I'D BE
SO BUSY...

TONIGHT, MY BAND'S
PLAYING, AND BETWEEN
REHEARSAL AND
EVERYTHING...

YOUR
PRIVATE
LIFE DOESN'T
CONCERN ME,
BOY. I'M A
BUSY MAN!

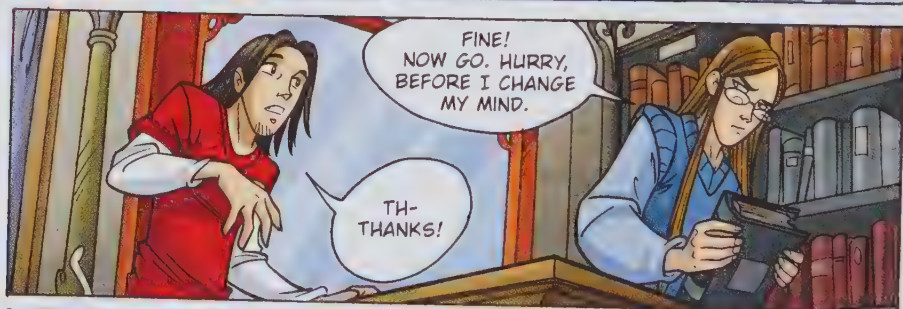
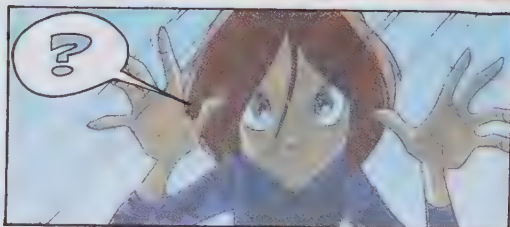
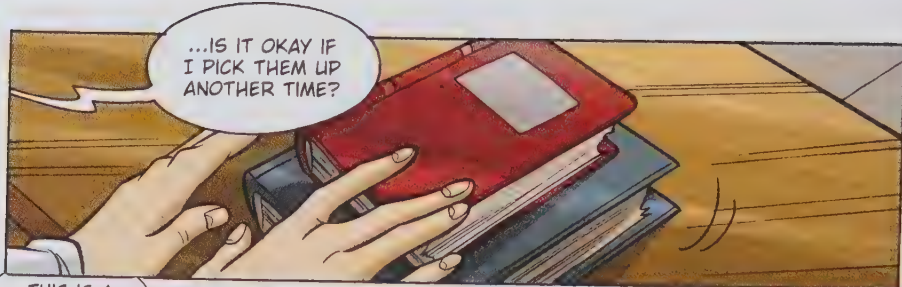
PANT...
PUFF...

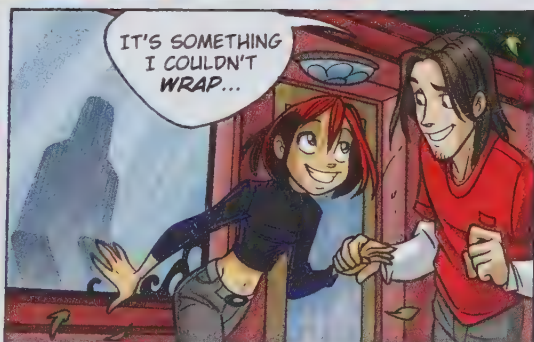
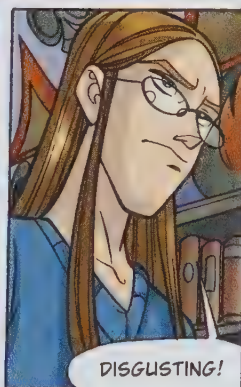
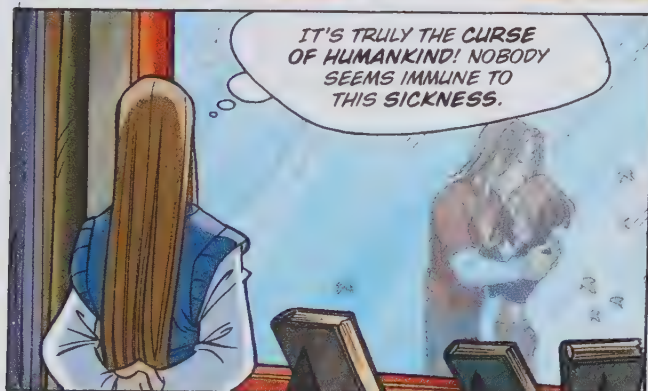
I REALLY DON'T
HAVE TIME
FOR...

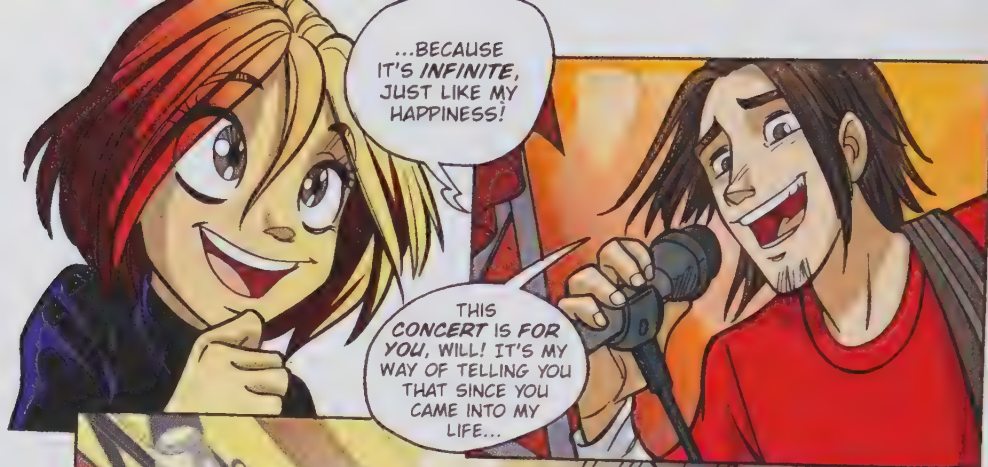
TOC TOC

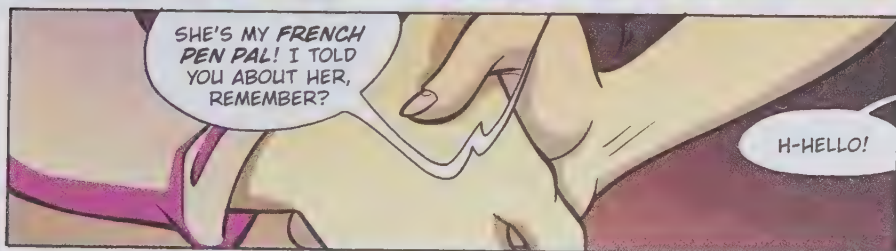
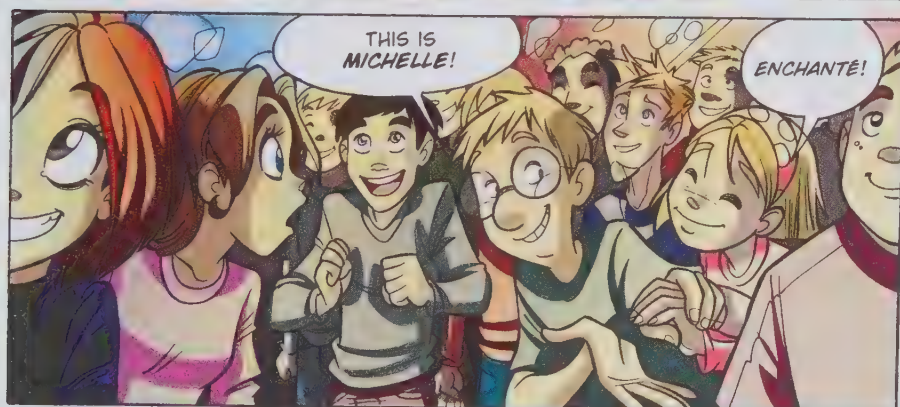
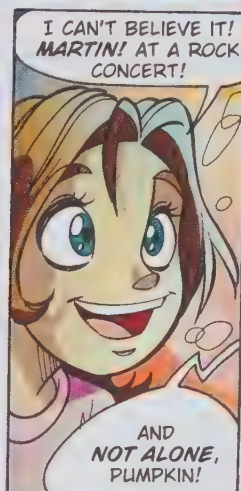
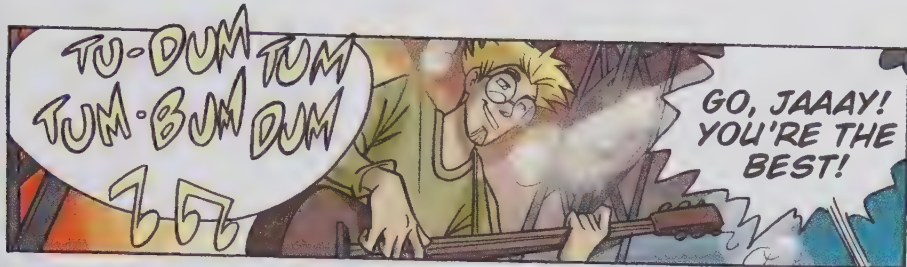
WILL!

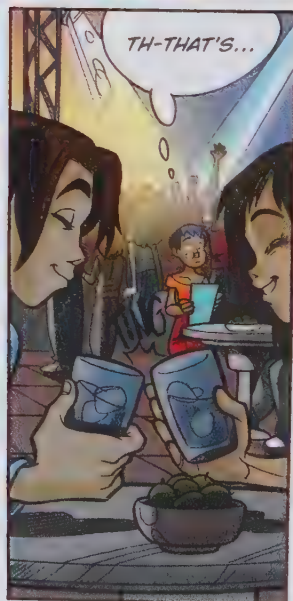
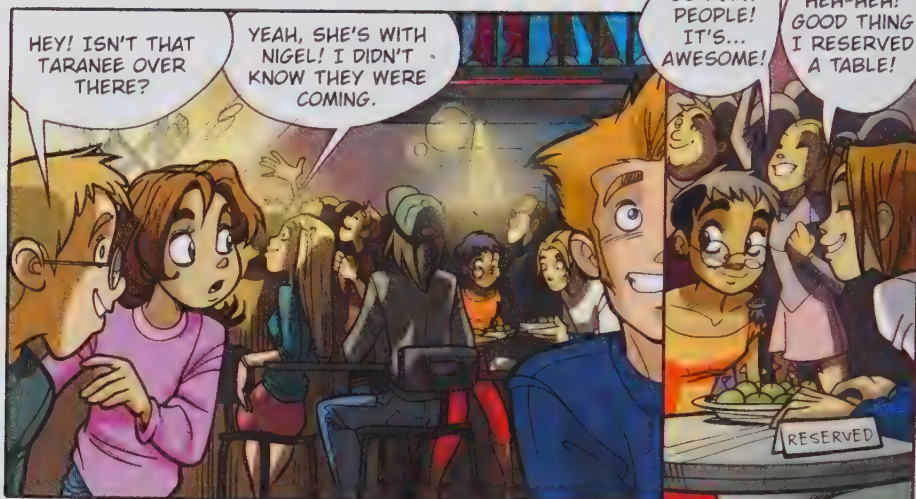
I THOUGHT I'D
HAVE TIME TO
TAKE THE BOOKS
HOME, BUT IF
WILL'S ALREADY
HERE...



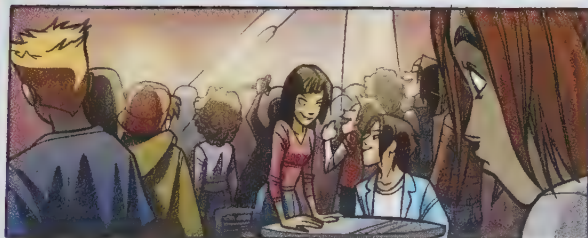
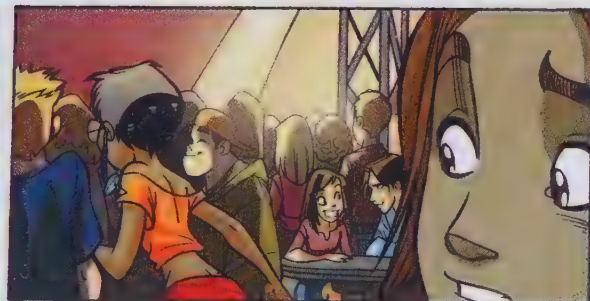
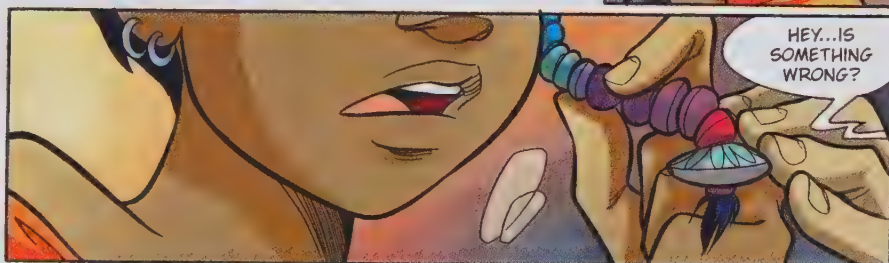
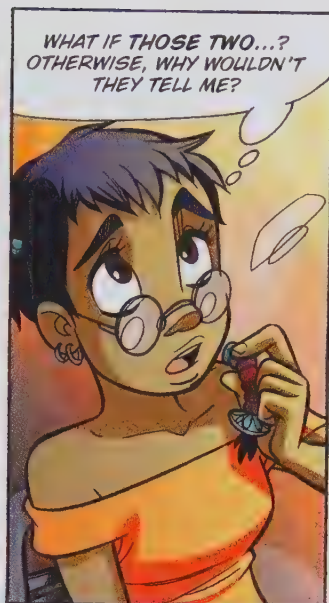




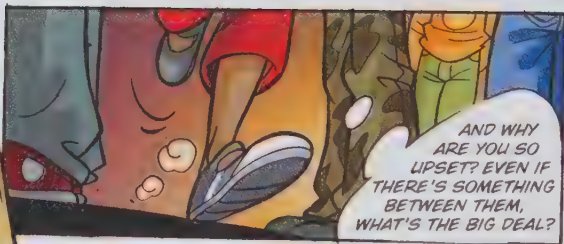




...LUKE AND
SHEILA!

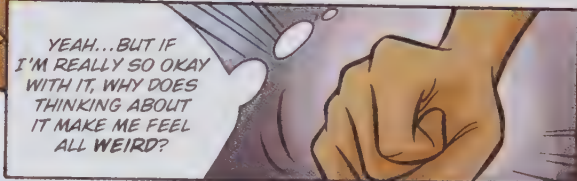


BE RATIONAL,
TARANEE! AFTER
ALL, LUKE AND SHEILA
COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN
YOU'D BE HERE
TONIGHT.

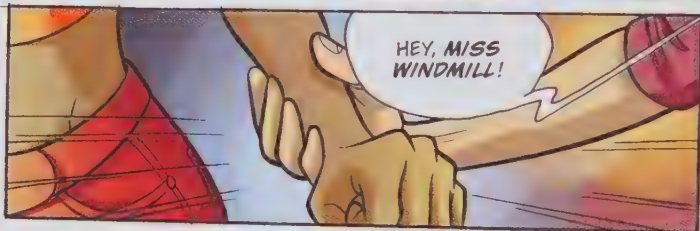


AND WHY
ARE YOU SO
LIPSET? EVEN IF
THERE'S SOMETHING
BETWEEN THEM,
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

YEAH...BUT IF
I'M REALLY SO OKAY
WITH IT, WHY DOES
THINKING ABOUT
IT MAKE ME FEEL
ALL WEIRD?



HEY, MISS
WINDMILL!



WHAT?
DISOWNING
ME?



SH-SHEILA!

IN THE FLESH!
BUT YOU LOOK
LIKE YOU'VE
SEEN A
GHOST!





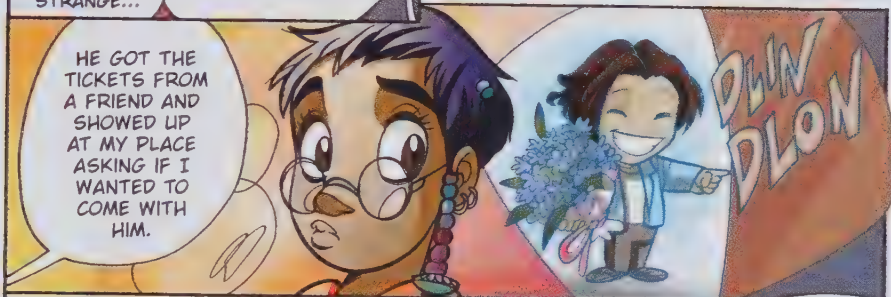
♪ UHH-UH,
MY FRIENDS... ♪
TRUST ME ONCE
AGAIN!

SURE
YOU'RE OKAY,
TARANEE?
YOU LOOK
STRANGE...

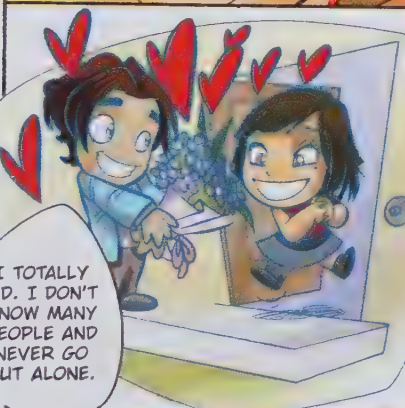
I'M JUST...
SURPRISED TO
SEE YOU HERE! WHY
DIDN'T YOU TELL ME
THIS AFTERNOON?



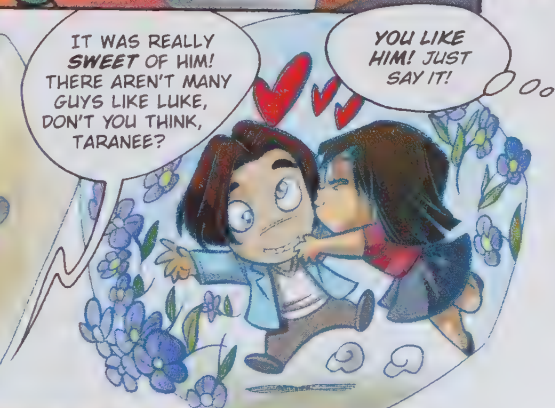
BECAUSE I DIDN'T
KNOW THEN!
LUKE ORGANIZED
EVERYTHING.



55

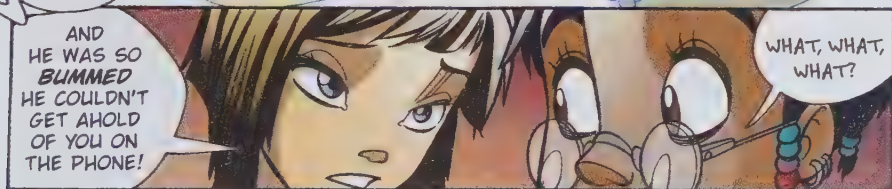


I TOTALLY
DID. I DON'T
KNOW MANY
PEOPLE AND
NEVER GO
OUT ALONE.



IT WAS REALLY
SWEET OF HIM!
THERE AREN'T MANY
GUYS LIKE LUKE,
DON'T YOU THINK,
TARANEE?

YOU LIKE
HIM! JUST
SAY IT!



AND
HE WAS SO
BUMMED
HE COULDN'T
GET AHEAD
OF YOU ON
THE PHONE!

WHAT, WHAT,
WHAT?

"YEAH! BEFORE COMING TO GET ME, HE TRIED CALLING YOU, BUT NOBODY PICKED UP.

THE PHONE... WANNA GO BACK IN?

NEVER MIND. IF IT'S IMPORTANT, THEY'LL LEAVE A MESSAGE.

"AND ON THE WAY HERE, HE LOOKED SO THOUGHTFUL... I'M SURE HE WAS THINKING ABOUT YOU!"

COME ON, SHEILA. THAT'S RIDICULOUS.

TRUST ME!

WINK

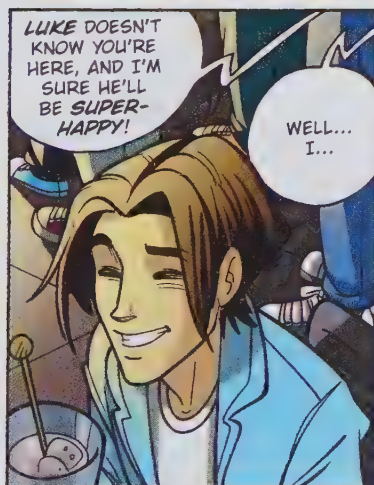
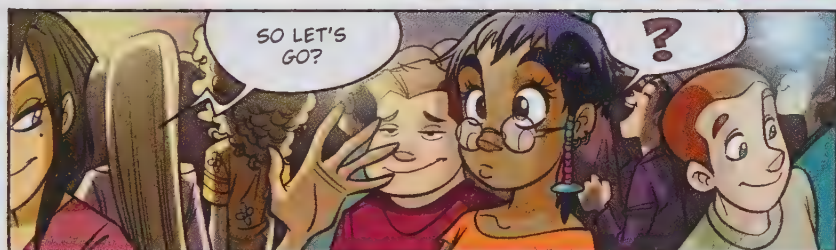
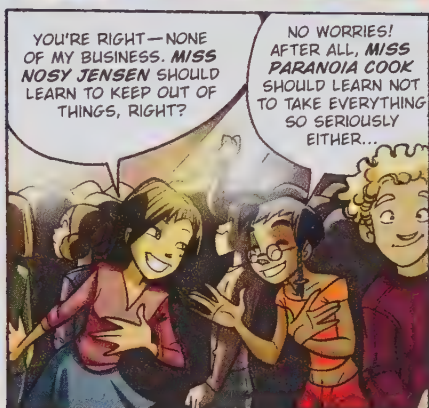
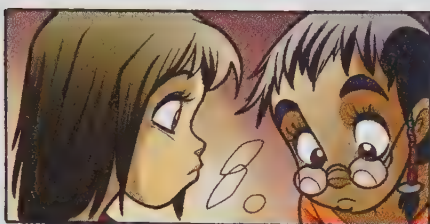
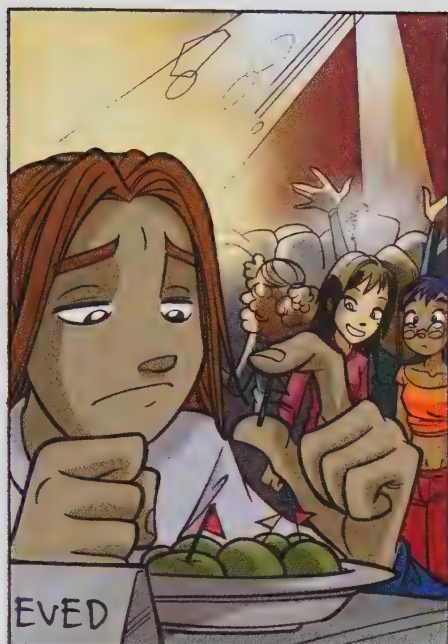
WHEN YOU'RE NOT THERE, HE WON'T STOP SAYING "TARANEE'S SO GOOD, TARANEE'S SO FUNNY, TARANEE'S SO BEAUTIFUL..."

B-BEAUTIFUL?

AHA! I THINK HE'S GOT A HUGE CRUSH!

AND YOU? I SAW YOU'RE HERE WITH SOME GUY... IS HE A FRIEND OR WHAT?

I... I MEAN, HE'S... WELL...



TARANEE'S SUDDENLY
GLAD FOR THE COLORFUL
LIGHTS ON THE DANCE
FLOOR, WHICH HIDE
HER BLUSHING...

LISTEN TO ME, BABY.
♪ I WAS FEELIN' ♪
REALLY BLUE...

...BUT SINCE
♪ THE DAY I
MET YOU, I'VE
BEEN LIVIN'
SOMETHIN' ♪
NEW!

THESE
COBALT GLUE
GUYS ARE
REALLY COOL!

COBALT
BLUE,
SHEILA!

OH...WELL...
THEIR *SOUND*
REALLY PULLS
YOU IN, DON'T
YOU THINK?

WHAT TO SAY?
RIGHT NOW, THE NOISE
INSIDE OF TARANEE
IS MUCH LOUDER
THAN THAT FILLING
THE ROCK-AND-ROLL
CAFÉ...

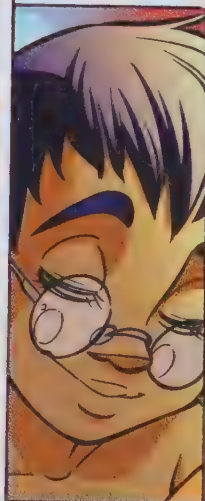
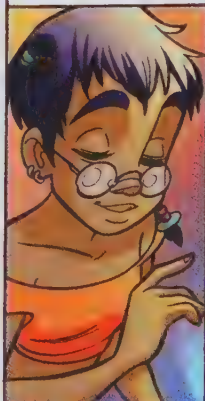
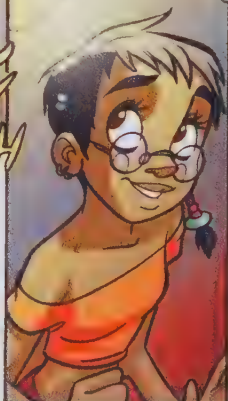
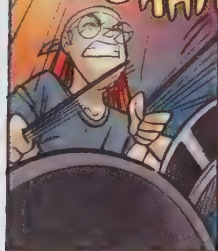
...AND HER
HEART BEATS
LIKE CRAZY TO
THE RHYTHM OF
THE BAND'S
DRUMS.

YES, COBALT
BLUE'S SOUND
REALLY PULLS
YOU IN, AS
SHEILA SAID...

...BUT TARANEE
HAS THE FEELING
THAT THE BEST
MUSIC IS THE ONE
THAT LETS YOU
LISTEN TO
YOUR SPIRIT...

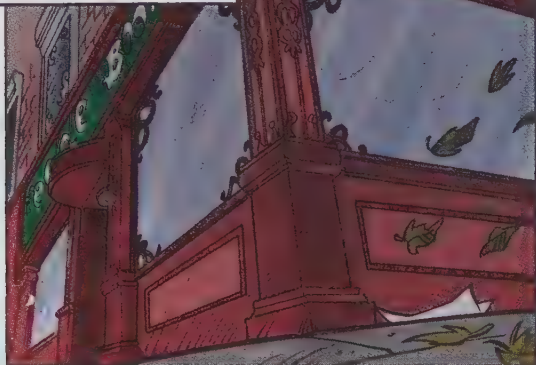
...THE MUSIC
OF SILENCE!

TURUPU
TURUTU
DSHHH
DSHHHH



SILENCE.

IT'S NIGHT. THE BOOKSHOP'S CLOSED, AND CEDRIC FEELS HE COULD ALMOST TOUCH THE SILENCE WHILE IT TAKES OVER THE EMPTY ROOMS.



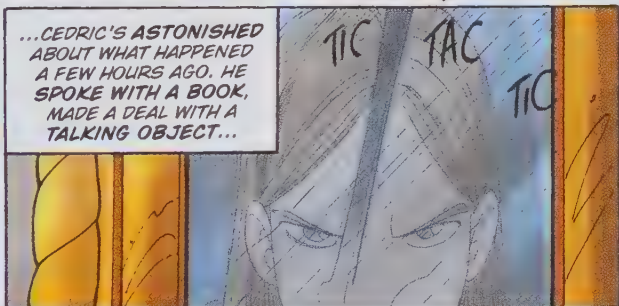
NOW THAT THE ONLY SOUNDS ARE THE CREAKING OF THE WOODEN SHELVES...



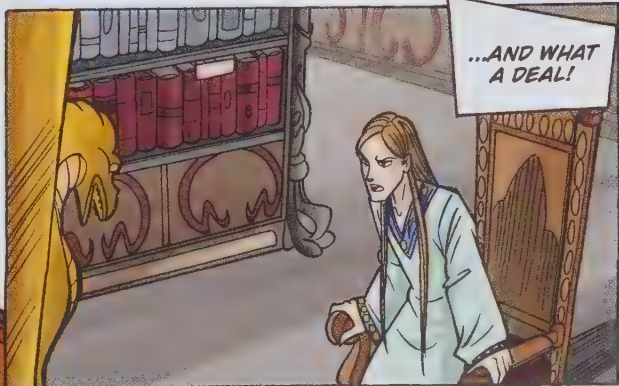
...AND THE TICKING OF THE PENDULUM CLOCK...

TIC
TAC
TIC
TAC

...CEDRIC'S ASTONISHED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED A FEW HOURS AGO. HE SPOKE WITH A BOOK, MADE A DEAL WITH A TALKING OBJECT...



...AND WHAT A DEAL!



HE THINKS
BACK TO THOSE
MOMENTS...AND
ASTONISHMENT
IS REPLACED BY
SKEPTICISM...

MAYBE
I WAS
IMAGINING
THINGS...
MY CONTACT
WITH THE
EARTHLINGS IS
LIKELY TO BLAME!

...AND
SKEPTICISM BY
SUSPICION!

AFTER
ALL, WHY—
OUT OF ALL THE
PEOPLE IT'S COME
INTO CONTACT
WITH—WOULD IT
CHOOSE ME?

YES...WHY?
WHY SHOULD I
TRUST A THING I
KNOW NOTHING
ABOUT?

WHY SHOULD I BLINDLY
OBEY ITS ORDERS, WITH
NO GUARANTEE OF
MY REWARD?

WHY SHOULD I
BELIEVE THAT IT
CAN DETERMINE
MY FUTURE, THAT
MY SALVATION
LIES BETWEEN
ITS PAGES?

BECAUSE
YOU HAVE NO
CHOICE, LORD
CEDRIC!

!!

YOU...
CAN READ MY
THOUGHTS!

THEN ANSWER
MY QUESTIONS!
CURSE YOU!

PONK

I'M
TALKING
TO YOU,
BOOK!

B-BOOK?
WHAT AM I DOING?
I'M TALKING TO...A
BLOCK OF PAPER!

AAARGH!
I'M GOING
INSAAAAANE!

BUT THAT VOICE
A MOMENT AGO...
I HEARD IT CLEARLY,
AND IT WAS THE SAME
ONE THAT...

OPEN THAT EYE!
OPEN THOSE
PAGES...

...OR I'LL DO IT
MYSELF WITHOUT
YOUR PERMISSION!

...NOW!

I'LL FIND OUT
WHAT YOU'RE
HIDING, AND
I'LL DO SO...

WITH YOUR
SILENCE, YOU'VE
SEALED YOUR FATE,
CURSED TALKING
BOOK!



AS QUICKLY AS IT IS UNLEASHED,
THE POWERFUL ENERGY VANISHES,
LEAVING THE BOOKSHOP BASEMENT
COMPLETELY DEVASTATED.

THE BOOK'S FURY SUBSIDES,
BUT ONE LAST SHOCKING
SURPRISE AWAITS THE
MAN FROM METAMOOR...



THE BOOK IS
EMBEDDED IN
THE WALL...

!!

IT IS WRITTEN:
"THE FOOLISH
MORTALS WHO
TRY TO OPEN
THE BOOK
WILL BE
SUCKED
INSIDE
IT."

SO
CONSIDER
YOURSELF
LUCKY I'VE
SPARED YOU...

...IN THE EXACT SAME
SPOT WHERE THE
PORTAL TO MERIDIAN*
ONCE WAS!

*AS SEEN IN
CHAPTER 7

...FOOLISH
EARTHLING!

!

HOW DARE
YOU! I'M
NOT...

CEDRIC
HAS TO HOLD
HIS TONGUE.
THE WETNESS
BLURRING HIS
SIGHT REMINDS
HIM OF THE
CRUEL TRUTH.

THEY'RE TEARS.
HUMAN TEARS.

TEARS OF
FURY AND
DESPAIR.
ONCE AGAIN,
AS WITH
PHOBOS,
LORD CEDRIC
HAS TO PLAY
ALONG AND
IS NOT THE
ONE PULLING
THE STRINGS.

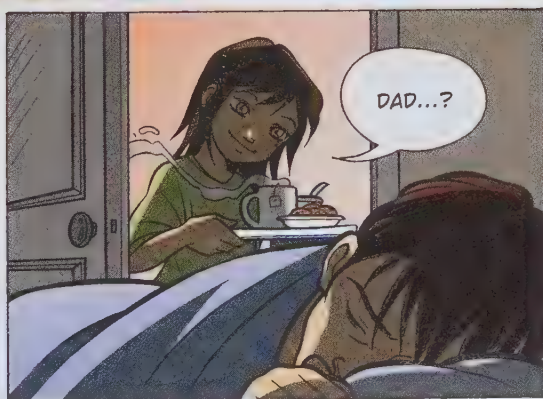
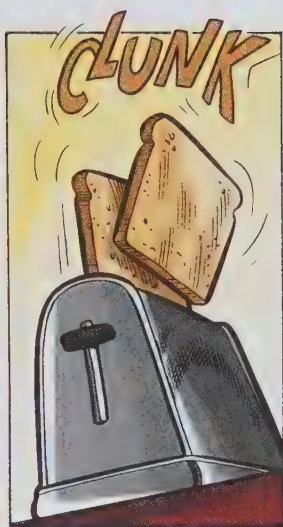
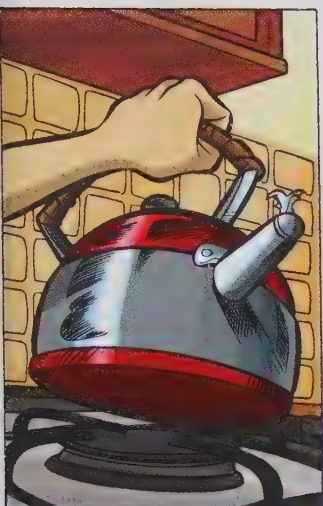
END OF
CHAPTER 53

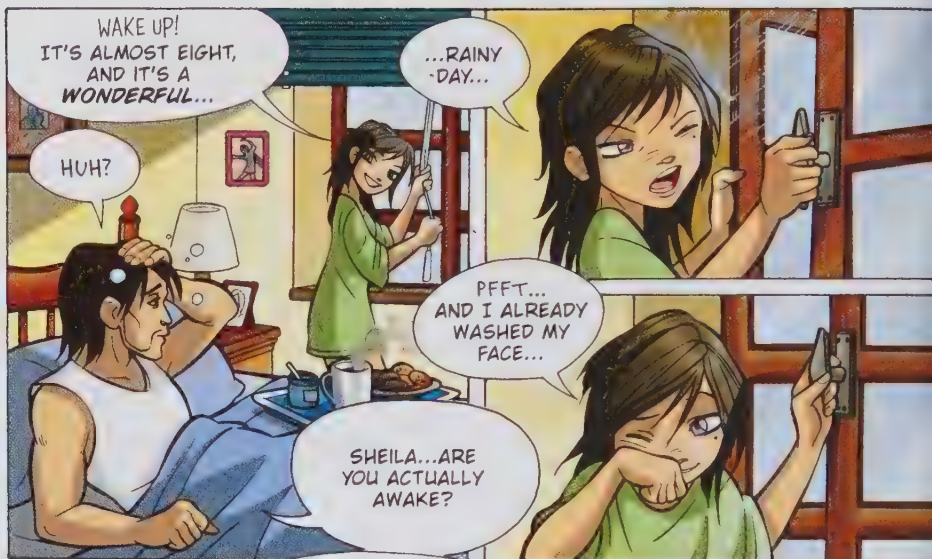


One More Hug

"I gotta find out what's
going on around here..."









AND SORRY FOR...THE WAY I'VE BEHAVED LATELY. I'VE BEEN GRUMPY AND MOODY. I'M REALLY SORRY.

I'M SORRY TOO...
FOR MAKING YET ANOTHER
DECISION WITHOUT ASKING
FOR YOUR OPINION.

WITHOUT MOM,
I TRIED TO DO MY BEST...
YOU WERE SO LITTLE,
AND I DRAGGED YOU TO
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE
WORLD.

YEAH...BUT I SHOULD
HAVE GIVEN YOU A NORMAL
LIFE, A PLACE TO GO HOME
TO, FRIENDS TO RELY ON,
YOU KNOW?

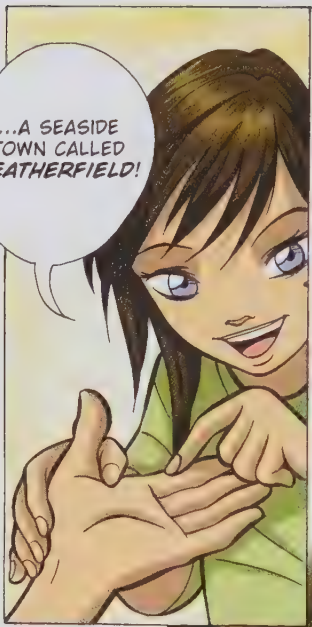
I LIKED IT!
I SAW SO MANY
PLACES, MET A
TON OF
CELEBRITIES...

INSTEAD, I **TORE**
YOU OUT OF A WORLD
THAT HAD BECOME YOUR
FAMILY AGAIN.

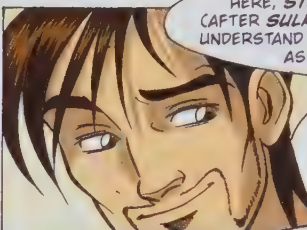
I STILL
WONDER IF I
DID THE RIGHT
THING...

LEMME SEE.

UM...ACTUALLY,
YOUR **LIFE LINE** IS
IRREGULAR AND TWISTY
AND LEADS TO A
SPECIFIC PLACE...

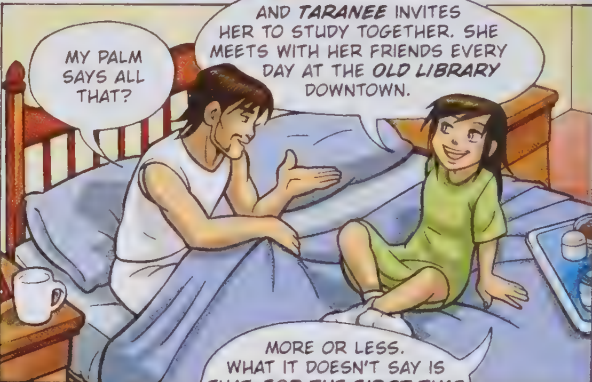


...A SEASIDE TOWN CALLED **HEATHERFIELD!**



HERE, **STUBBORN** YOUNG SHEILA (AFTER **SULKING** FOR A BIT) BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND THAT SETTLING DOWN ISN'T AS BAD AS SHE THOUGHT.

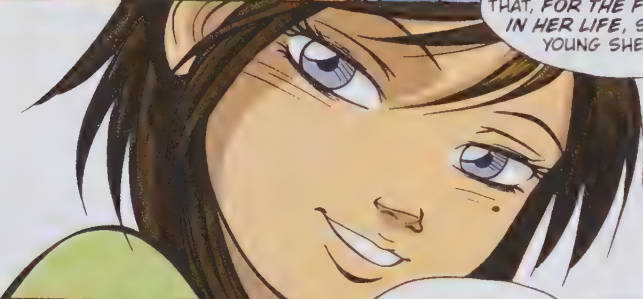
SHE CAN MAKE **FRIENDS** HER OWN AGE AND HANG OUT WITH THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, **LUKE** TAKES HER TO A MEGA-PARTY IN A BAR WHERE AN AWESOME ROCK BAND IS PLAYING.



MY PALM SAYS ALL THAT?

AND **TARANEE** INVITES HER TO STUDY TOGETHER. SHE MEETS WITH HER FRIENDS EVERY DAY AT THE **OLD LIBRARY** DOWNTOWN.

MORE OR LESS. WHAT IT DOESN'T SAY IS THAT, **FOR THE FIRST TIME** IN HER LIFE, **STUBBORN** YOUNG SHEILA...

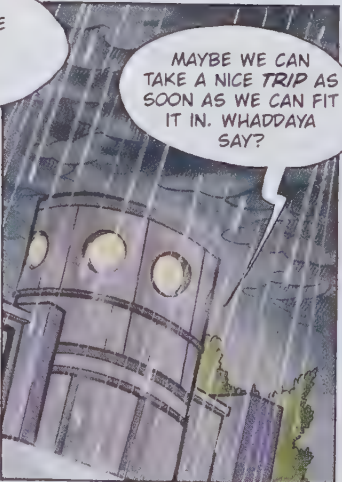


...IS REALLY STARTING TO FEEL **AT HOME!**



NOW THAT WE'RE SETTLED, I'D LIKE TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH YOU, HONEY.

ALL THE TIME YOU WANT, DADDY.



MAYBE WE CAN TAKE A NICE TRIP AS SOON AS WE CAN FIT IT IN. WHADDAYA SAY?

A RAINY MORNING
AND A STORMY
AFTERNOON...

...A TRIP?

YEAH.
THAT'S WHAT
SHE WAS TRYING
TO TELL ME.

IN HER OFFICE,
SHE HAD A TON OF
BROCHURES ABOUT
EXOTIC, GORGEOUS
PLACES.

THAT'S ODD.
THE HOLIDAYS ARE STILL
WAY OFF, AND IT'S NOT
LIKE YOUR MOM LET YOU
MISS SCHOOL...

MAYBE SHE'S
JUST ORGANIZING
THINGS EARLY.

IF ONLY I'D LISTENED,
SHE'D HAVE EXPLAINED.

YOU CAN MAKE UP
FOR IT TONIGHT. SUSAN
WON'T EXPECT YOU GOT HER
A **PRESENT** TO APOLOGIZE
FOR NOT MAKING
TIME TO
TALK.

THINK SHE'LL
LIKE IT?

WHO DOESN'T
LIKE SURPRISES?

BY THE WAY...
I'VE GOT ONE FOR
YOU TOO!

Go

YOU KNOW
SHEILA JENSEN,
THE DAUGHTER
OF KARMILLA'S
CHOREOGRAPHER?

THAT
SUPER-CUTE
GIRL IN YOUR
CLASS?

.....
UM...I MEAN...
I THINK I KNOW
WHO SHE IS...

SHE SAW YOU
PLAYING AT THE
ROCK-AND-ROLL
CAFÉ AND
LOVED IT.

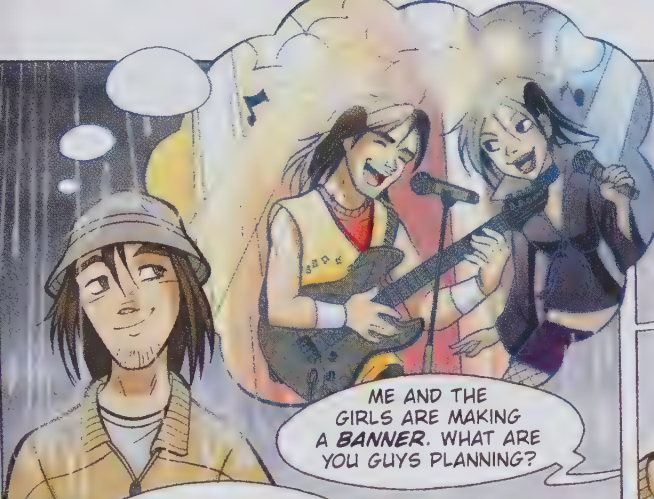
SHE'D LIKE A
DEMO TAPE OF
YOUR BAND...

...SO
SOME BIGWIG
SHE KNOWS CAN
LISTEN TO IT!

HERE'S THE
POOL. SEE YOU AT
SCHOOL FOR THE
PREPARATIONS?

HUH?

FOR THE
CENTENARY OF THE
SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE!
THE SHINDIG WITH ALL
THE STUDENTS AND
TEACHERS! DON'T TELL
ME YOU FORGOT.



NEVER MIND. I CAN GUESS... WELL, I'M GOING FOR A *SWIM*.



MY *INCREDIBLE* WILL...

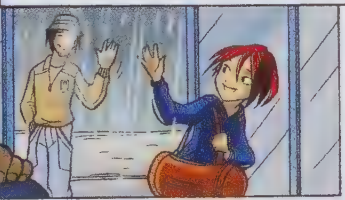
ME AND THE GIRLS ARE MAKING A *BANNER*. WHAT ARE YOU GUYS PLANNING?

GETTING *SOAKED* IN THIS DOWNPOUR WASN'T ENOUGH?

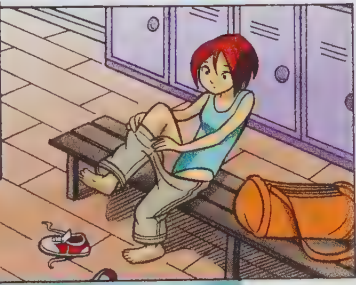
VANDOM! YOUR TEAMMATES HAVE BEEN IN THE POOL FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES ALREADY!



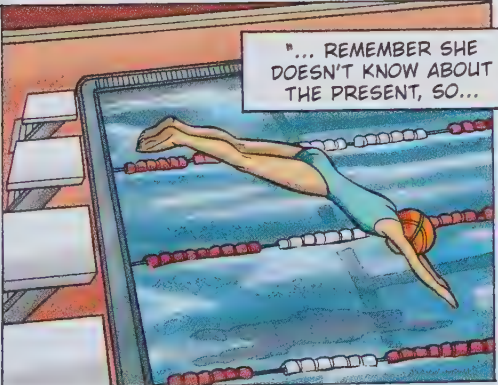
"IT'S KARL, THE COACH! BETTER RUN, OR HE'LL MAKE ME SWIM TWICE AS MANY LENGTHS!"



"I'LL GIVE YOU A CALL WHEN I'M DONE, OKAY? OH, BY THE WAY, IF YOU SEE MY MOM..."

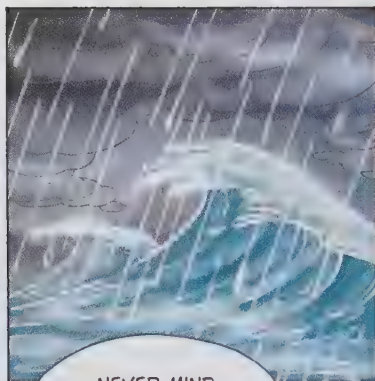


"... REMEMBER SHE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THE PRESENT, SO..."

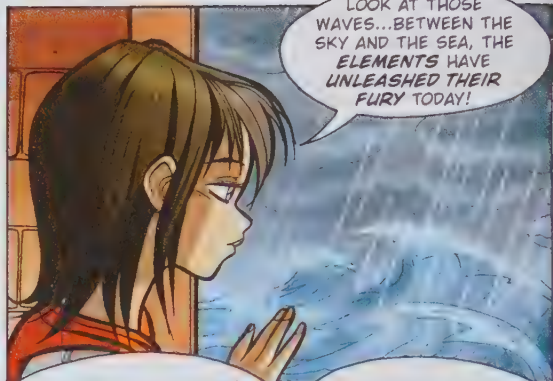


"... KEEP YOUR LIPS *SEALED!*"





NEVER MIND.
I GUESS YOU DIDN'T
EVEN NOTICE.



LOOK AT THOSE
WAVES...BETWEEN THE
SKY AND THE SEA, THE
ELEMENTS HAVE
UNLEASHED THEIR
FURY TODAY!

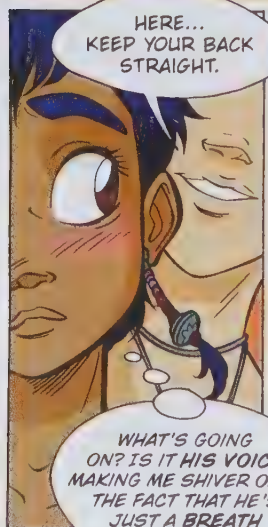


OH...
CRIPES!

NO, NOT LIKE THAT!
WRONG POSITION
AGAIN, TARANEE.

HANG ON. LET ME
SHOW YOU.

?



HERE...
KEEP YOUR BACK
STRAIGHT.

WHAT'S GOING
ON? IS IT HIS VOICE
MAKING ME SHIVER OR...
THE FACT THAT HE'S
JUST A BREATH
AWAY?

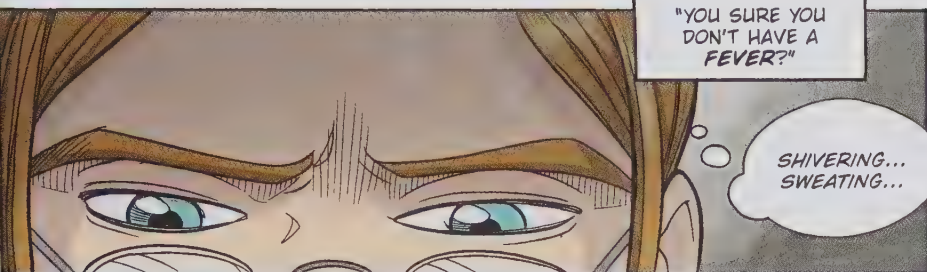


...LIKE THIS!

!!



AAAH!
YOU'RE
BURNING
HOT!



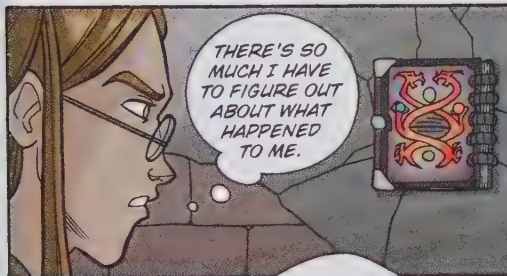
"YOU SURE YOU
DON'T HAVE A
FEVER?"

SHIVERING...
SWEATING...

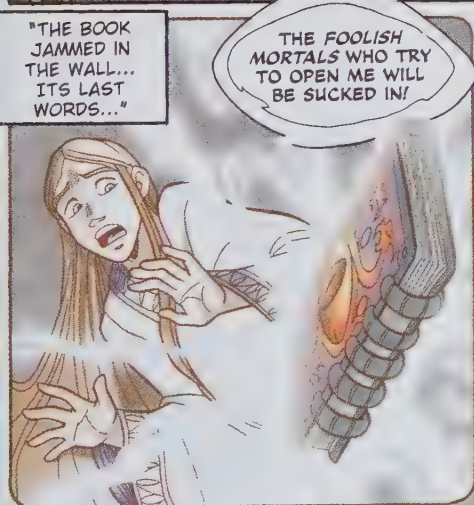
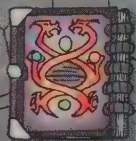


ALL THESE
FOREIGN HUMAN
FEELINGS I DON'T
KNOW HOW TO
HANDLE...

I HATE THE EARTH-
LINGS' WEAKNESSES! I
HATE THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE
BECOMING MINE. IF ONLY THIS
TERRIBLE HEADACHE WOULD
STOP OPPRESSING MY BRAIN
AND LET ME THINK!

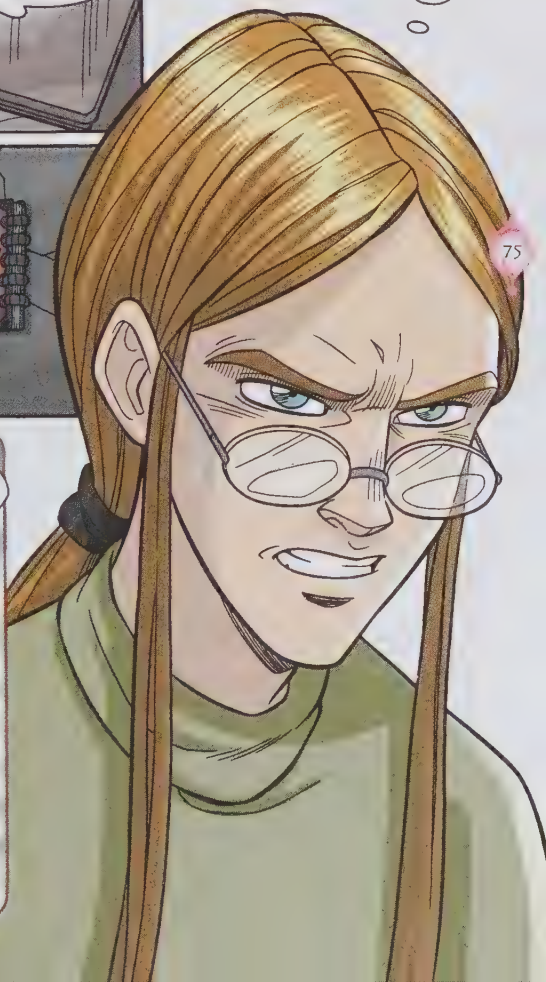


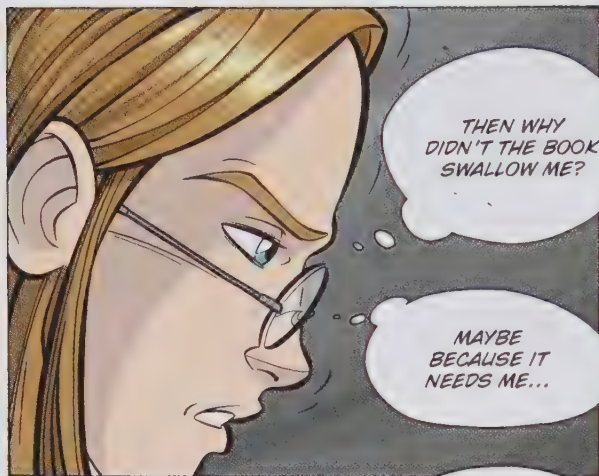
THERE'S SO
MUCH I HAVE
TO FIGURE OUT
ABOUT WHAT
HAPPENED
TO ME.



"THE BOOK
JAMMED IN
THE WALL...
ITS LAST
WORDS..."

THE FOOLISH
MORTALS WHO TRY
TO OPEN ME WILL
BE SUCKED IN!



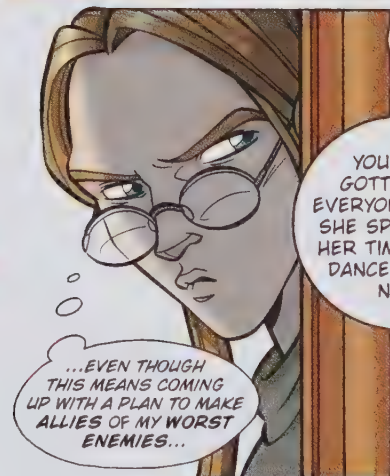


THEN WHY
DIDN'T THE BOOK
SWALLOW ME?

MAYBE
BECAUSE IT
NEEDS ME...



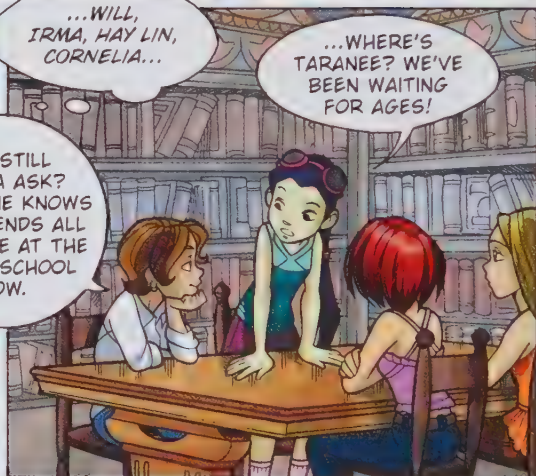
ONLY I CAN HELP IT
FIND THE ELEMENTAL
CREATURES THAT CAN
DEFEAT THE CUSTODIANS
OF THE MAGICAL
GEMS...



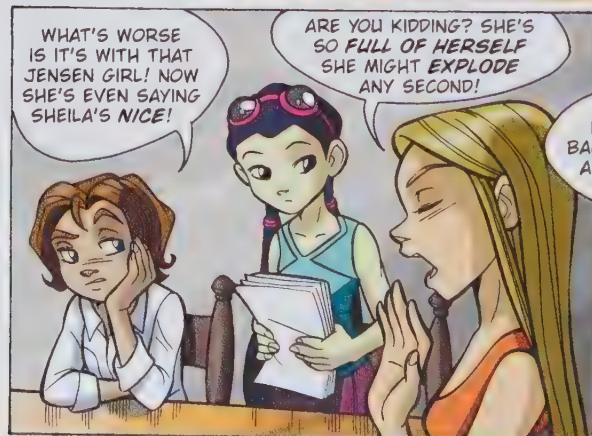
...WILL,
IRMA, HAY LIN,
CORNELIA...

YOU STILL
GOTTA ASK?
EVERYONE KNOWS
SHE SPENDS ALL
HER TIME AT THE
DANCE SCHOOL
NOW.

...EVEN THOUGH
THIS MEANS COMING
UP WITH A PLAN TO MAKE
ALLIES OF MY WORST
ENEMIES...



...WHERE'S
TARANEE? WE'VE
BEEN WAITING
FOR AGES!



WHAT'S WORSE
IS IT'S WITH THAT
JENSEN GIRL! NOW
SHE'S EVEN SAYING
SHEILA'S NICE!

ARE YOU KIDDING? SHE'S
SO FULL OF HERSELF
SHE MIGHT EXPLODE
ANY SECOND!

I HATE TO ADMIT IT, BUT
FOR ONCE, I THINK YOU'RE
RIGHT, CORNY.

UM...GUYS!
HOW ABOUT WE GET
BACK TO BUSINESS? IT'S
ALMOST TIME FOR THE
PARTY, AND...

HERE WE
ARE! SORRY
WE'RE LATE.



SHE'S...WELL,
YOU ALL KNOW
HER, RIGHT?

HI!

I THOUGHT
THIS WAS A GOOD
CHANCE TO SPEND
SOME TIME *TOGETHER*
AND GET TO KNOW
EACH OTHER
BETTER.

GREAT IDEA!

YEAH,
AWESOME.
LET HER JOIN
THE GROUP
WITHOUT EVEN
ASKING OUR
OPINION!

WE WERE THINKING
ABOUT THE BANNER FOR
THE CENTENARY. I SKETCHED
SOME IDEAS AND...

I GOTTA
GO!

WHAT?
NOW THAT WE'RE
ALL HERE?

COME ON, IRMA.
DON'T BE SILLY!

YOU'RE WRONG,
WILL. NOW
WE'RE TOO
MANY!

Butt out. I'm not
spending another
minute here
with HER!

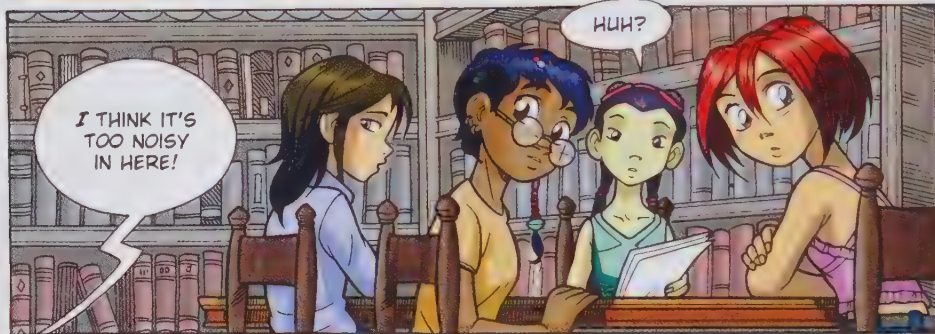
I'M...GOING
WITH HER! I JUST
REMEMBERED
I'VE GOT
SOMETHING
TO DO...



UM...YOU
WERE SAYING,
HAY LIN?

WELL...I WAS
THINKING ABOUT
SOMETHING
LIKE...

THAT'S **B**RILLIANT!
WHAT DO YOU THINK,
SHEILA?

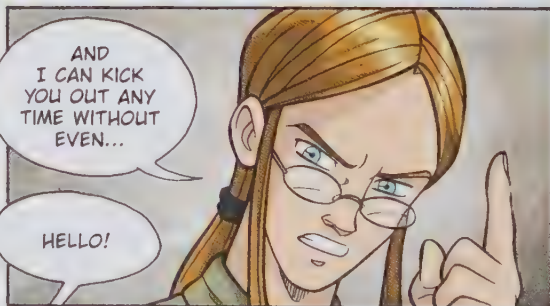


I THINK IT'S
TOO NOISY
IN HERE!

HUH?

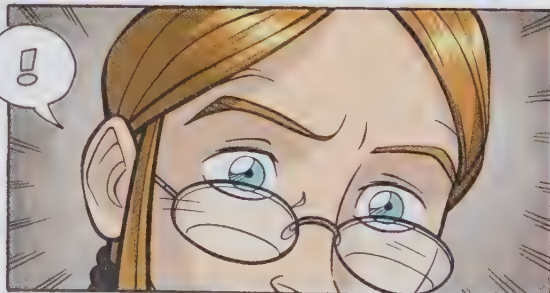


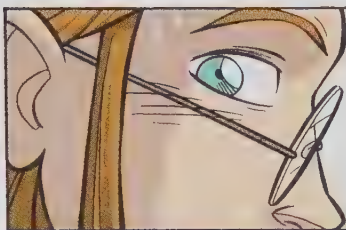
LET ME
REMIND YOU THIS
IS A READING
ROOM, NOT
THE MARKET-
PLACE!



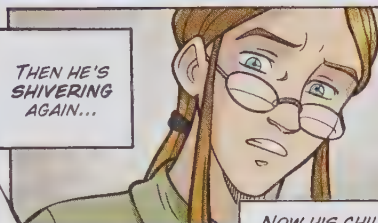
AND
I CAN KICK
YOU OUT ANY
TIME WITHOUT
EVEN...

HELLO!





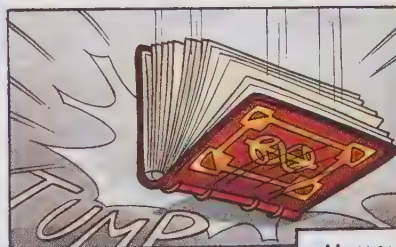
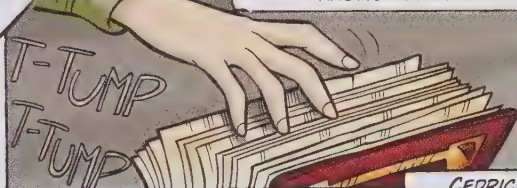
HEARING THAT VOICE, CEDRIC RELAXES. HE'S SUDDENLY FILLED WITH A STRANGE, PEACEFUL FEELING...



THEN HE'S SHIVERING AGAIN...

...BUT THIS IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE TREMORS CAUSED BY THE SHOCKING CONFRONTATION WITH THE MAGICAL BOOK.

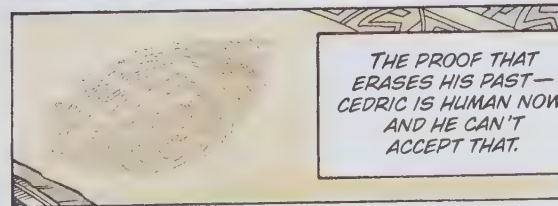
NOW HIS CHILLS ARE ACCOMPANIED BY OTHER STRANGE SYMPTOMS: DRY MOUTH, PALPITATIONS, A KNOTTED STOMACH.



CEDRIC'S SWEATY FINGERS LEAVE PRINTS ON THE ANCIENT VOLUME HE'D BEEN READING.



HUMAN FINGERPRINTS, A COMPLEX LABYRINTH OF LINES.



THE PROOF THAT ERASES HIS PAST—CEDRIC IS HUMAN NOW. AND HE CAN'T ACCEPT THAT.

SO IN THE END,
THE GROUP SPLIT
UP BECAUSE IRMA
AND CORNELIA CAN'T
STAND SHEILA.

BUT SHEILA AND
TARA ARE BECOMING GOOD
FRIENDS, PUTTING HER AT ODDS
WITH THE OTHER TWO...

FUNNY BECAUSE IRMA
AND CORNY, WHO ARE ALWAYS
PICKING ON EACH OTHER, ARE
NOW JOINED AT THE HIP...

YEAH...

AND WHAT DO
YOU THINK?

...AND
THE GROUP
IS DIVIDED!

I MEAN,
NEW FRIENDSHIPS
DON'T HAVE TO THREATEN
AN ESTABLISHED GROUP.
THEY CAN BE **ENRICHING**,
DON'T YOU THINK?

UM...
I DUNNO WHICH
SIDE TO
TAKE.

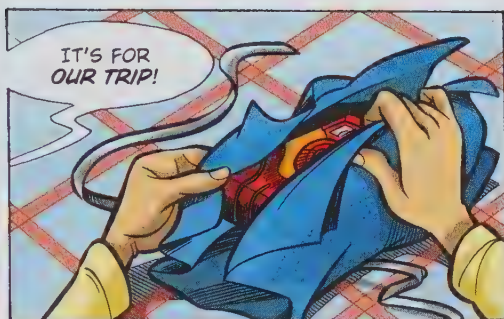
SURE, SHEILA MIGHT
NOT WIN AN **OSCAR** FOR
FRIENDLINESS ANYTIME
SOON...BUT SHE JUST
GOT TO TOWN...

...AND I **FEEL**
FOR HER.

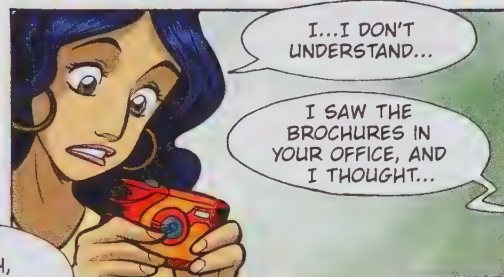
WHAT'S
THIS?



A
SURPRISE
FOR YOU.
OPEN IT!



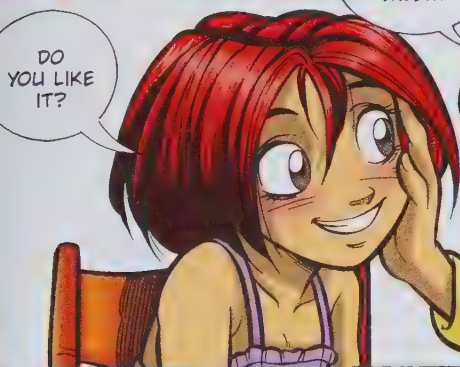
IT'S FOR
OUR TRIP!



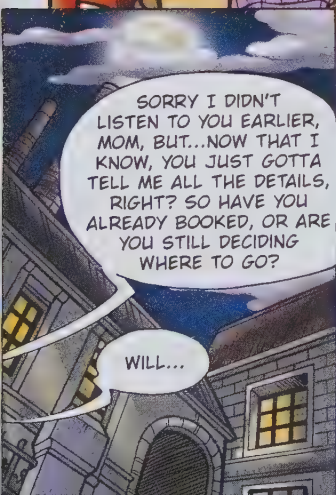
I...I DON'T
UNDERSTAND...

I SAW THE
BROCHURES IN
YOUR OFFICE, AND
I THOUGHT...

OH,
WILL...

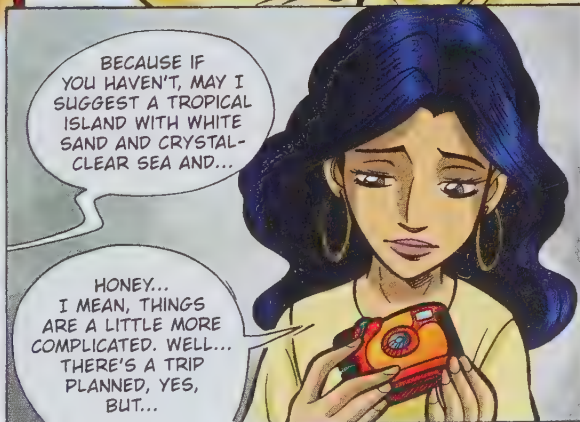


DO
YOU LIKE
IT?



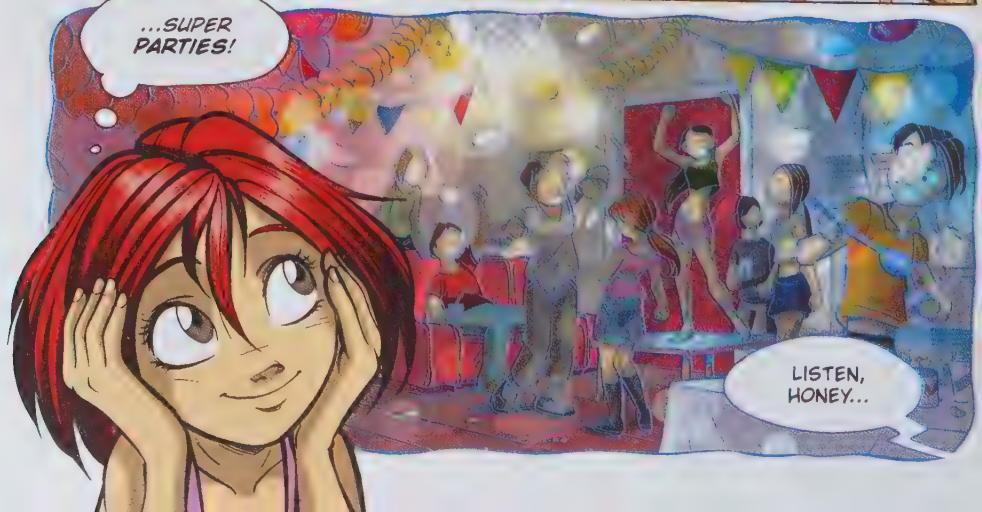
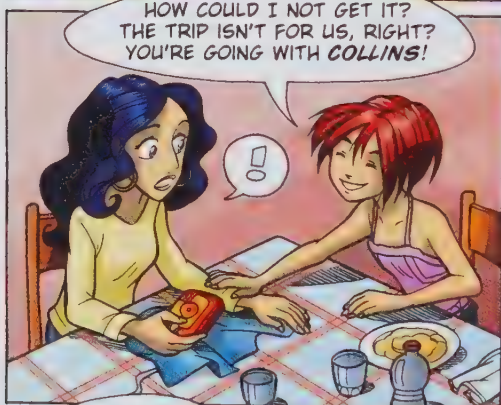
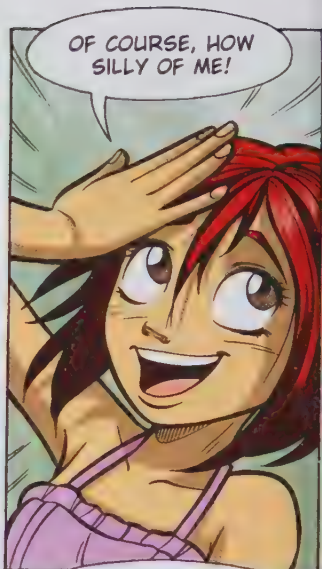
SORRY I DIDN'T
LISTEN TO YOU EARLIER,
MOM, BUT...NOW THAT I
KNOW, YOU JUST GOTTA
TELL ME ALL THE DETAILS,
RIGHT? SO HAVE YOU
ALREADY BOOKED, OR ARE
YOU STILL DECIDING
WHERE TO GO?

WILL...



BECAUSE IF
YOU HAVEN'T, MAY I
SUGGEST A TROPICAL
ISLAND WITH WHITE
SAND AND CRYSTAL-
CLEAR SEA AND...

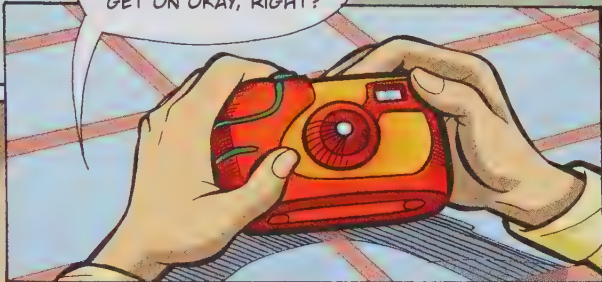
HONEY...
I MEAN, THINGS
ARE A LITTLE MORE
COMPLICATED. WELL...
THERE'S A TRIP
PLANNED, YES,
BUT...





...BECAUSE **WE**...
FOR A WHILE NOW,
WE'VE BEEN THINKING...
I MEAN...WE MADE A
DECISION, AND...

...IF YOU'RE OKAY
WITH IT...AFTER ALL,
I THINK YOU AND **DEAN**
GET ON OKAY, RIGHT?





WILL...
PLEASE...



HONEY...
I KNOW I
SHOULD'VE TOLD
YOU SOONER,
BUT...

BIP
BIP
BIP



TUUT
TUUT



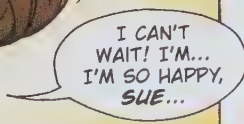
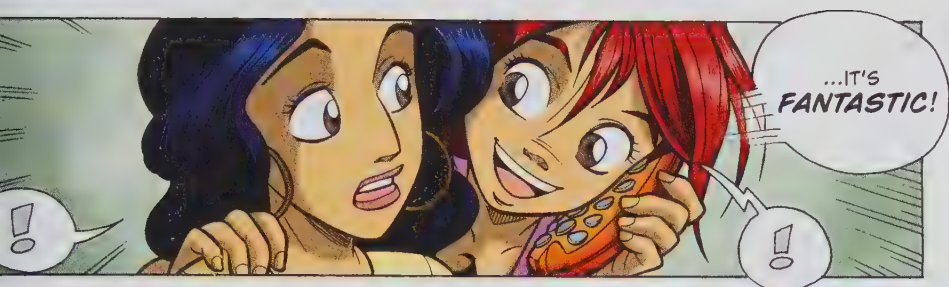
HELLO?



BREEEP BREEEP

PROF,
it's Will!
I just
heard,
and...





"... I WISH I WAS
ALREADY THERE!"



"I PRONOUNCE
YOU HUSBAND
AND WIFE!"

?

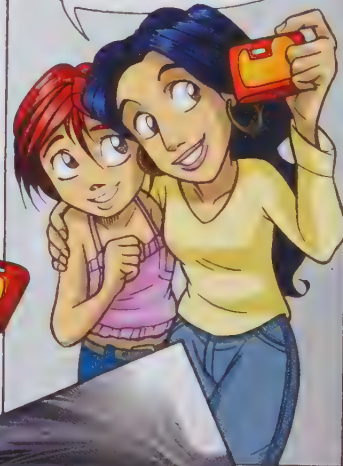


CHEESE!

HEY, WHATCHA
DOIN'? YOU HAVEN'T
SET OFF YET!

OH, YES...
AND WE HAVE TO
IMMORTALIZE THE
MOMENT!

HONEY, THIS IS
THE BEGINNING OF OUR
BEAUTIFUL JOURNEY
TOGETHER...



CLICK



"... AS A NEW FAMILY!"

FROM NEW
IMAGES TO OLD
ONES. SHEFFIELD
INSTITUTE, THE
MORNING AFTER.

...AND THAT'S
OUR SCHOOL ON
INAUGURATION DAY.

THAT'S **SHERWOOD
SHEFFIELD**, THE FOUNDER.
HIS GREAT-GRANDSON IS A
CLOSE FRIEND OF PRINCIPAL
KNICKERBOCHER.

C'EST FUNNY! AND
POURQUOI DOES HE
HAVE A...CITROUILLE
ON HIS JACKET?

OH, THE **PUMPKIN**?
IT'S SHEFFIELD'S SYMBOL.
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, THE
SCHOOL WAS BUILT ON A
PUMPKIN FIELD, AND...

YOU'VE GATHERED
BEAUCOUP MATERIAL
FOR YOUR PRESENTATION,
MARTIN! C'EST VRAIMENT
TRÈS INTERESSANT!

YOU THINK SO?
I DON'T WANNA
BORE EVERYONE
TOMORROW...

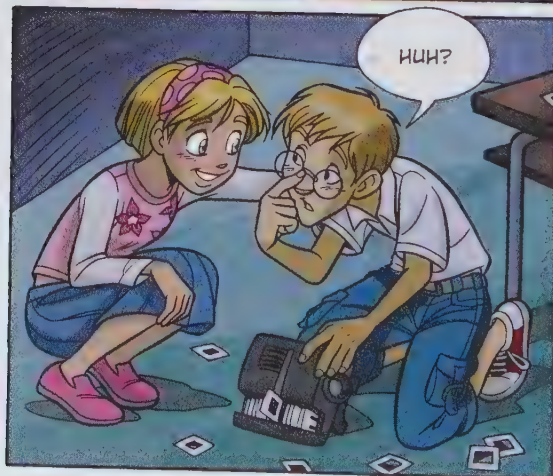
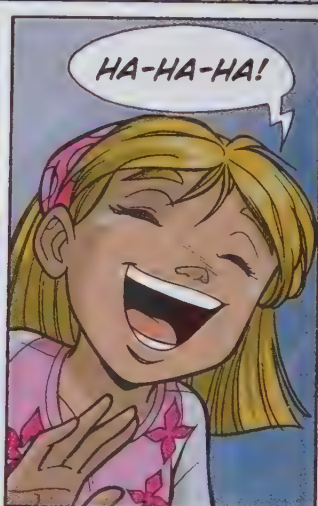
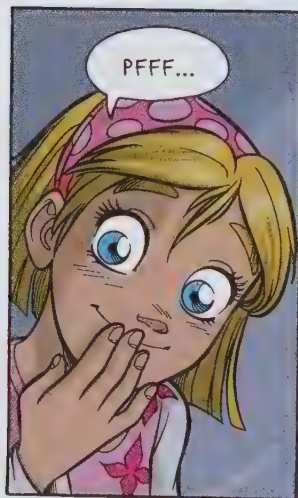
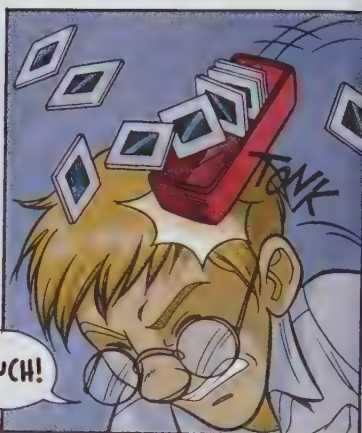
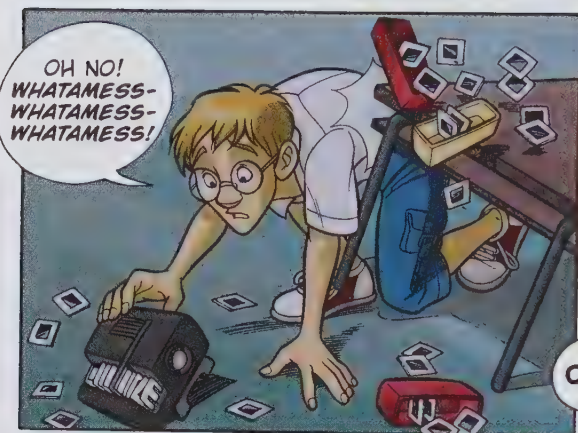
BORE? MAIS NON,
QU'EST-CE QUE
TU DIS?

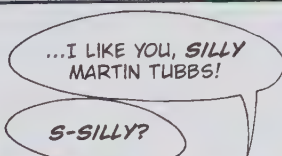
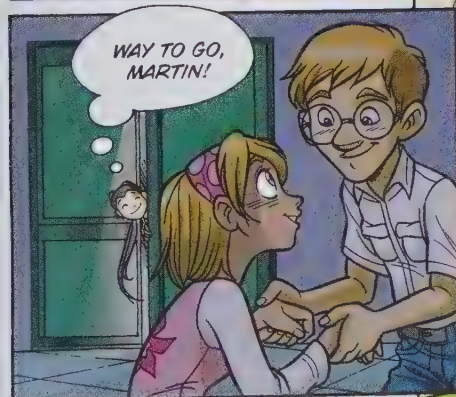
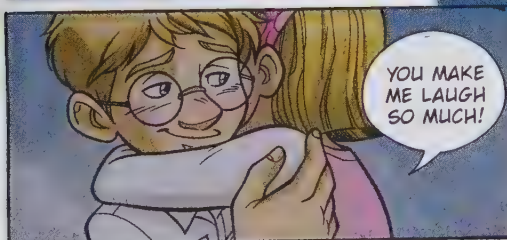
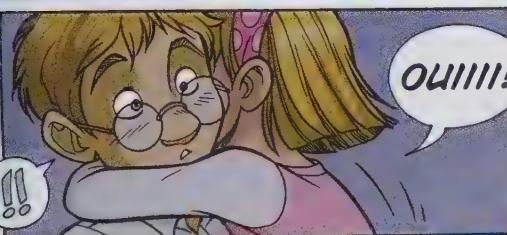
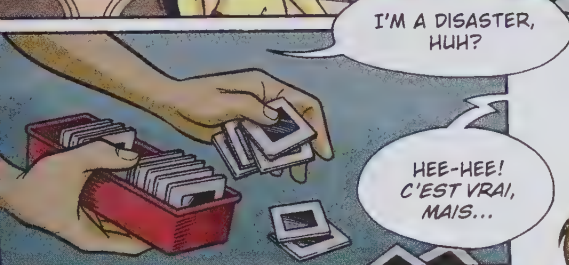
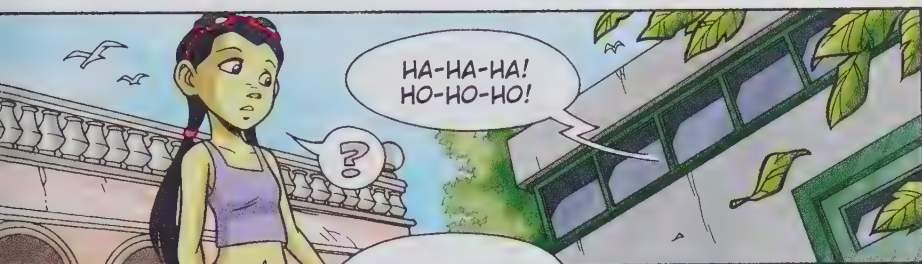
UM...

?

URGH!

OH!





MARTIN AND THE
FRENCH GIRL?

DEAR IRMA, LOOKS
LIKE YOU MISSED OUT
ON A REAL *TOMBEUR
DE FEMMES!*

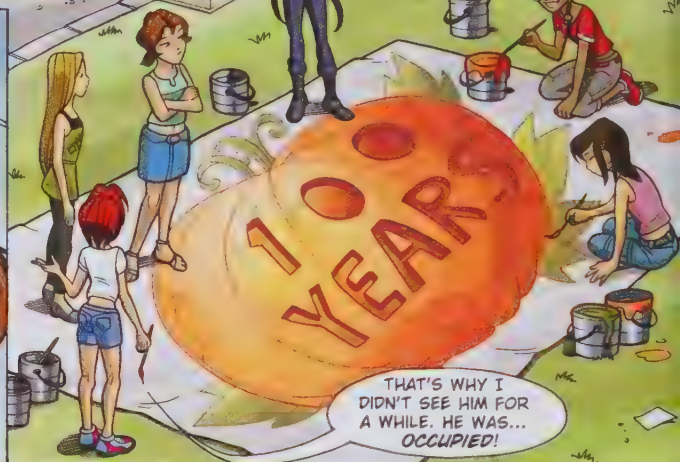
HMPH!

I THINK
HER NAME'S
MICHELLE. I HEARD
SHE'S STAYING WITH
THE TUBBS FOR A
COUPLE WEEKS.

DID YOU KNOW
MARTIN SPENT A FEW
DAYS AT HER PLACE
TOO? THEY STARTED
OFF AS *PEN PALS*
TO IMPROVE HIS
FRENCH...

RAISE YOUR
HAND IF YOU STILL
THINK STUDYING IS
USELESS! HEE-HEE!

WHAT'S WRONG
WITH ME? I SHOULD
BE HAPPY FOR HIM,
BUT I FEEL...
CAST ASIDE.



THAT'S WHY I
DIDN'T SEE HIM FOR
A WHILE. HE WAS...
OCCUPIED!

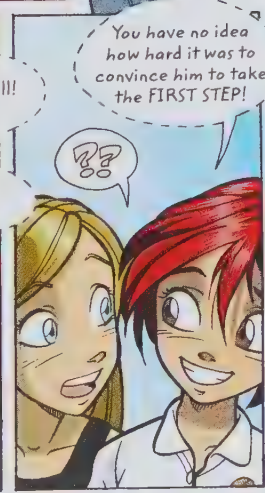
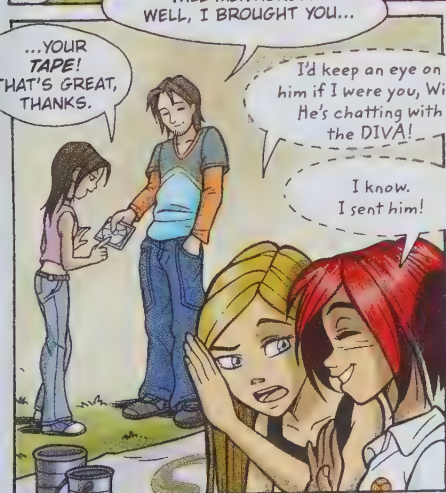
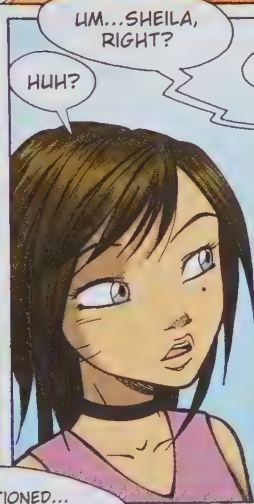
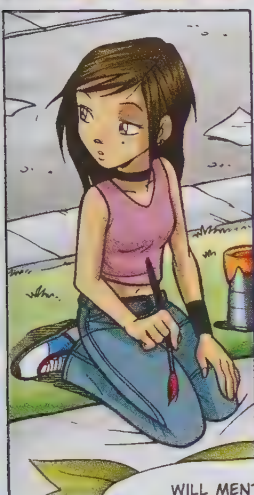
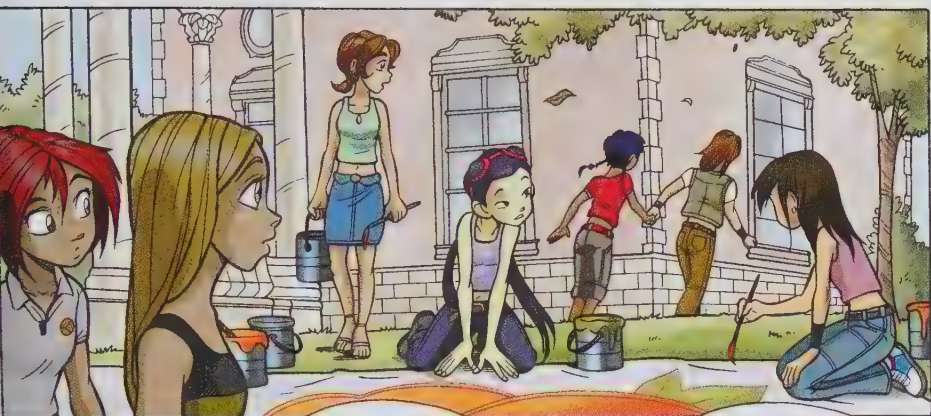
I GOTTA ADMIT
I DIDN'T EXPECT
THIS FROM DEAR
OLD MARTIN.

ME NEITHER,
WILL. SOMETIMES, IT'S
CRAZY HOW LITTLE WE
KNOW ABOUT...

...THE PEOPLE
WE THINK WE
KNOW!

I GOTTA
TALK TO
YOU!

!



...USELESS,
GOOD-FOR-
NOTHING!

I D-DON'T UNDERSTAND.
WHAT MAKES YOU
THINK THAT I...?

THAT'S HOW
YOU SEE ME,
RIGHT?

DON'T MESS
ME AROUND! YOU'VE
DONE THAT ENOUGH
ALREADY!

YOU THINK I HAVEN'T NOTICED
HOW YOU'VE BEEN TREATING
ME LATELY? LIKE HAVING ME
AROUND **BOTHERS** YOU,
LIKE I'M...A **BURDEN**!

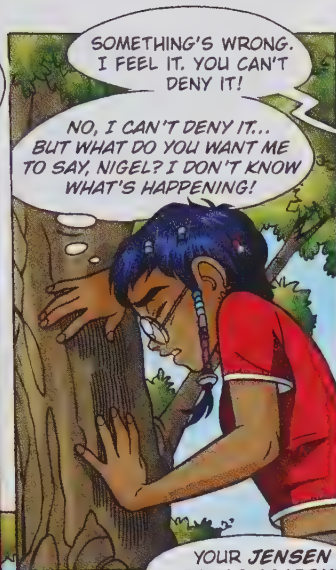
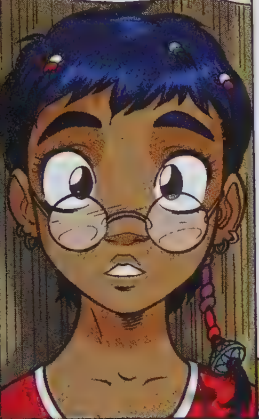
THAT'S NOT
TRUE!

IT ISN'T?
THEN HOW DO YOU
EXPLAIN THE OTHER
NIGHT AT THE
ROCK-AND-ROLL
CAFÉ?

"I TOOK YOU
THERE TO SPEND
SOME TIME
TOGETHER..."

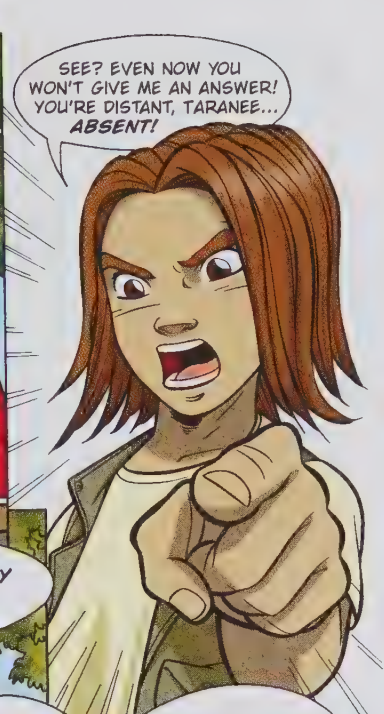
"... BUT **YOU** PREFERRED
SPENDING THAT TIME
WITH YOUR **NEW**
FRIENDS!"

THE TRUTH
IS THAT SINCE YOU
STARTED DANCE SCHOOL,
THINGS BETWEEN US
HAVE CHANGED,
TARANEE!



SOMETHING'S WRONG.
I FEEL IT. YOU CAN'T
DENY IT!

NO, I CAN'T DENY IT...
BUT WHAT DO YOU WANT ME
TO SAY, NIGEL? I DON'T KNOW
WHAT'S HAPPENING!



SEE? EVEN NOW YOU
WON'T GIVE ME AN ANSWER!
YOU'RE DISTANT, TARANEE...
ABSENT!

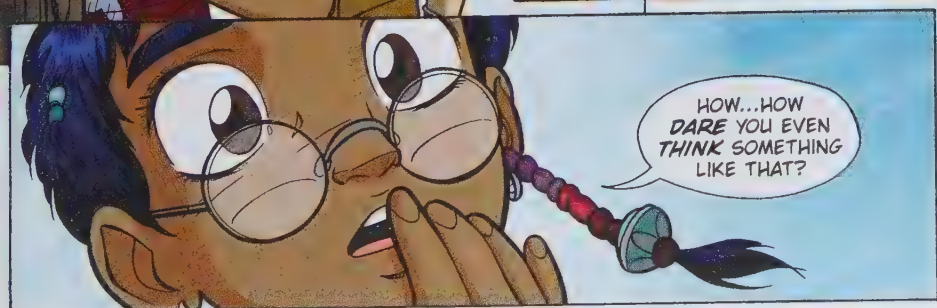
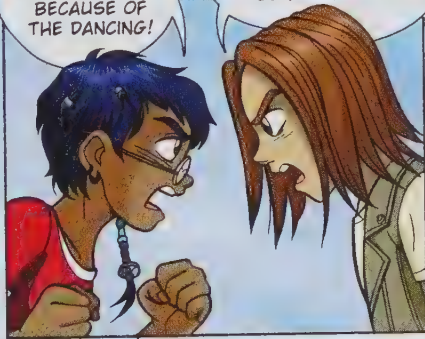


**NO—
THAT'S NOT TRUE!**

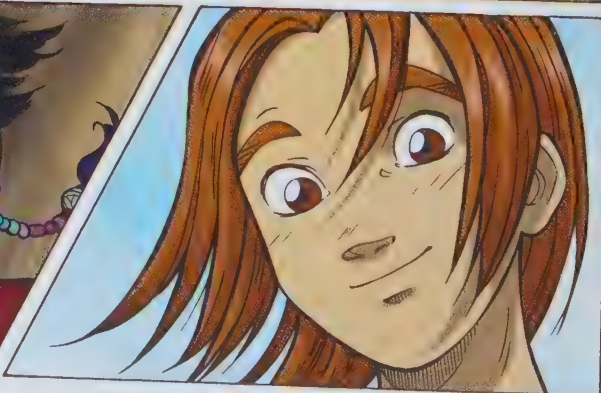
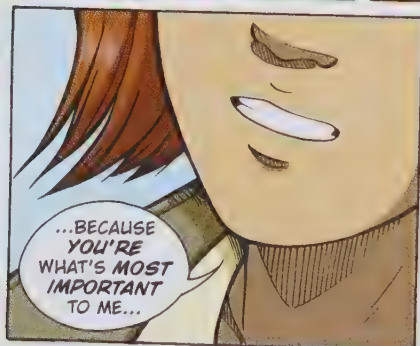
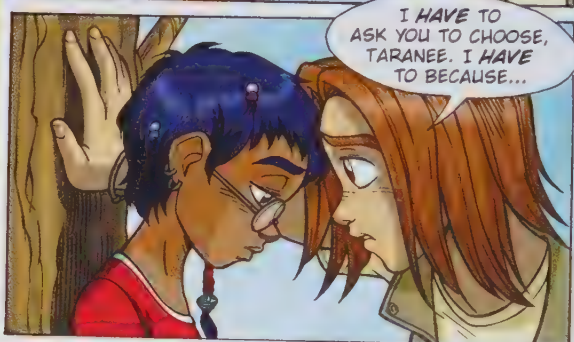
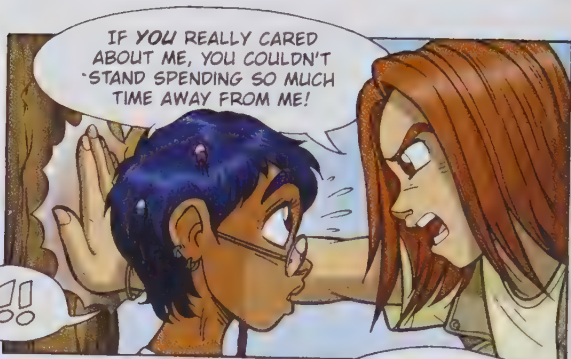
YOUR **JENSEN
DANCE ACADEMY**
IS TEARING US
APART!

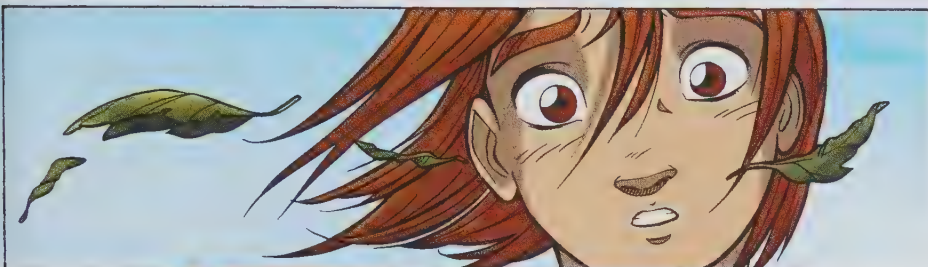
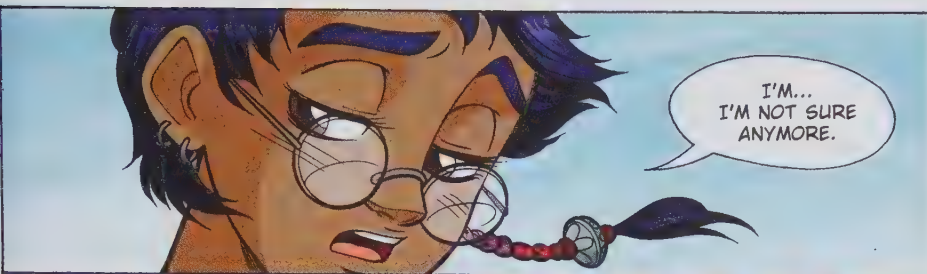
IF THINGS
AREN'T WORKING,
IT'S NOT JUST
BECAUSE OF
THE DANCING!

I'M SURE THAT
IF YOU **GAVE IT UP**,
EVERYTHING WOULD
BE FINE AGAIN!



HOW...HOW
DARE YOU EVEN
THINK SOMETHING
LIKE THAT?





THEIR WORDS
LINGER IN THE AIR...

Witch

Will Irma Tarane Cornalia May Lin



THERE ARE
QUESTIONS THAT
MIGHT BETTER GO
UNANSWERED...

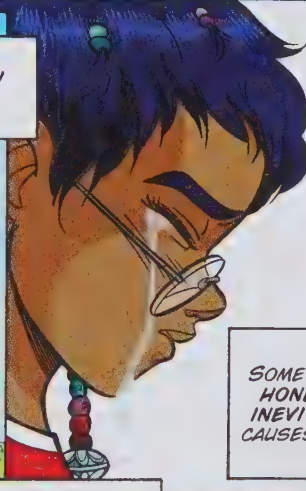
QUESTIONS
THAT SHOULD
BE LEFT
HANGING...

...TO AT LEAST GIVE THE
ASKER THE BENEFIT
OF THE DOUBT.

WOOOSH



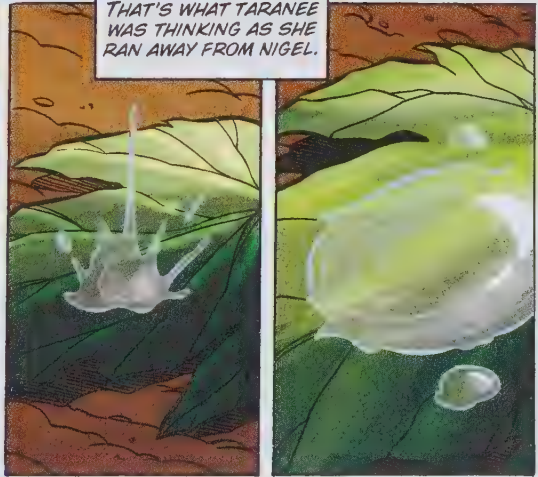
THE TRUTH
CAN HURT.



SOMETIMES,
HONESTY
INEVITABLY
CAUSES PAIN.



THAT'S WHAT TARANEE
WAS THINKING AS SHE
RAN AWAY FROM NIGEL.



THAT'S WHAT
THE ORACLE
THINKS TOO...



...WHEN WISE
YAN LIN TELLS HIM
THAT W.I.T.C.H.
HAS ARRIVED IN
KANDRAKAR...



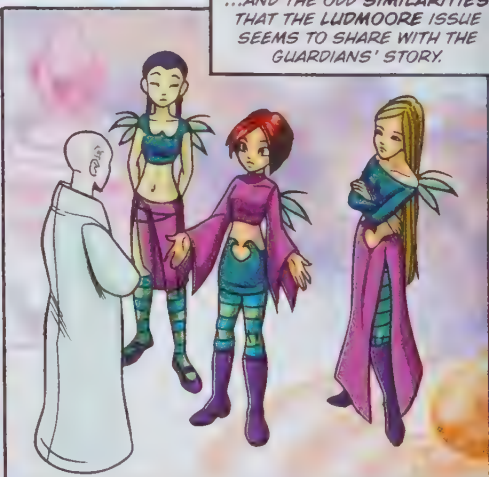
...WITH A LOT
OF IMPORTANT
QUESTIONS.



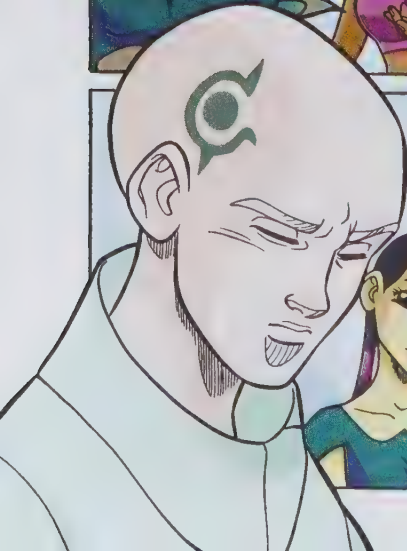
QUESTIONS ABOUT
THE STRANGE PHENOMENA
CONCERNING THEIR POWERS...



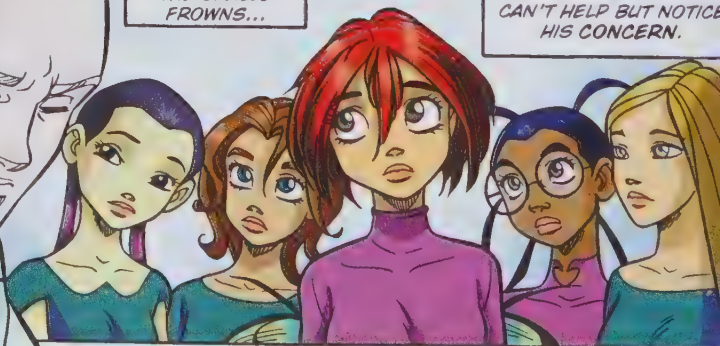
...AND THE ODD SIMILARITIES
THAT THE LUDMOORE ISSUE
SEEMS TO SHARE WITH THE
GUARDIANS' STORY.



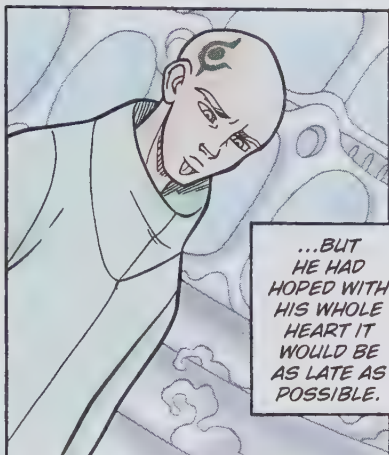
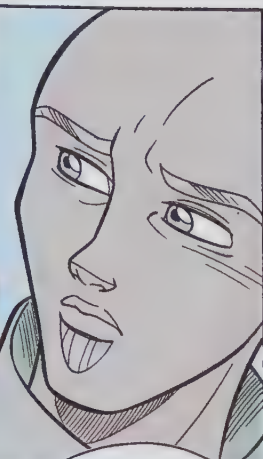
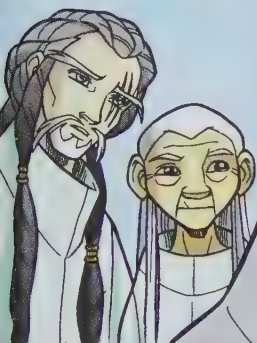
HEARING
THAT NAME,
THE ORACLE
FROWNS...



...AND THE GUARDIANS
CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE
HIS CONCERN.



HE KNEW THAT, SOONER
OR LATER, SOME THINGS
WOULD RESURFACE
FROM THE PAST...

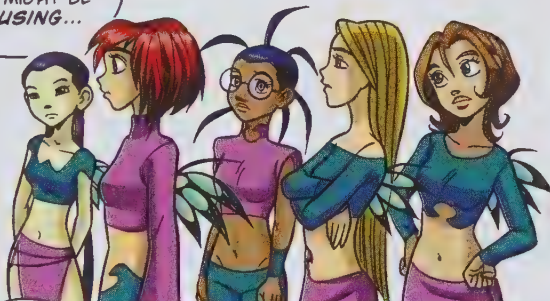


...BUT
HE HAD
HOPED WITH
HIS WHOLE
HEART IT
WOULD BE
AS LATE AS
POSSIBLE.

NOW THAT
THE MOMENT
HAS COME,
THE ORACLE
CAN'T PLEAD
IGNORANCE,
BUT HE ALSO
KNOWS HIS
ADMISSION
WON'T SATISFY
THE GIRLS'
CURIOSITY...



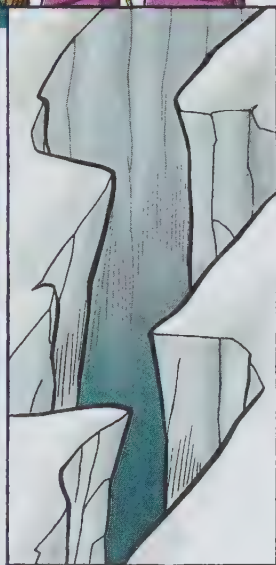
THE
INFORMATION
I AM ABOUT TO
SHARE MIGHT BE
CONFUSING...



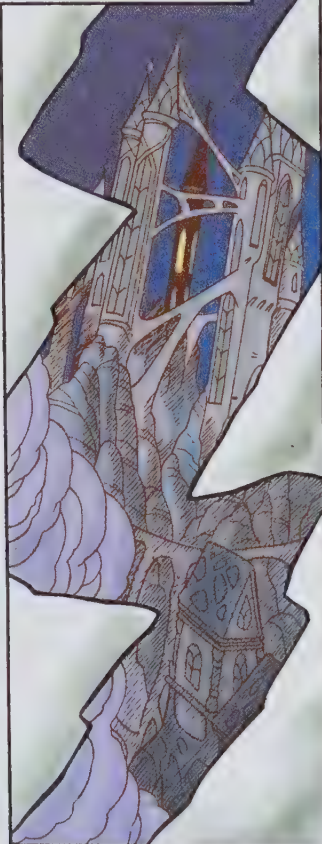
IT CONCERNS
DARK TIMES
KANDRAKAR HOPED
TO FORGET...



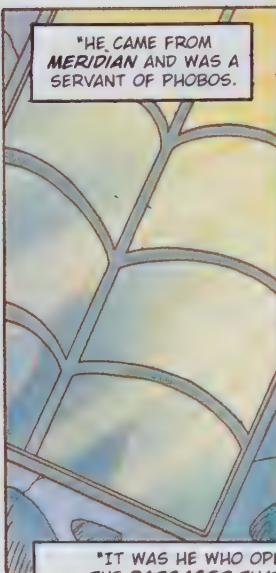
...BECAUSE
THEY REOPEN
A PAINFUL
WOUND IN THE
HISTORY OF THE
FORTRESS.



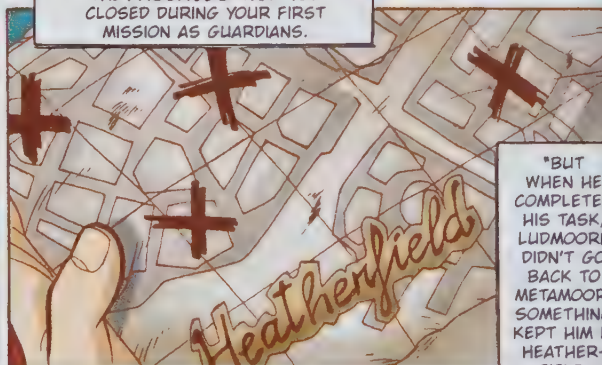
"YES, THE LEGENDARY
LUDMOORE **REALLY**
EXISTED.



"HE CAME FROM
MERIDIAN AND WAS A
SERVANT OF PHOBOS.



"IT WAS HE WHO OPENED
THE **PASSAGES** THAT YOU
CLOSED DURING YOUR FIRST
MISSION AS GUARDIANS.



"THE TYRANT
SENT HIM TO
EARTH WITH
THE TASK OF
WEAKENING
THE WALL
SEPARATING
IT FROM
METAMOOR.



"BUT
WHEN HE
COMPLETED
HIS TASK,
LUDMOORE
DIDN'T GO
BACK TO
METAMOOR.
SOMETHING
KEPT HIM IN
HEATHER-
FIELD.

"STRONGER
THAN HIS TIES
TO HIS WORLD OR
LOYALTY TO
HIS MASTER...
SOMETHING
MYSTERIOUS
AND
INEXPLICABLE...



"... JUST AS MYSTERIOUS
AND INEXPLICABLE AS HIS
SUDDEN **DISAPPEARANCE**
ACCOMPANIED BY STRANGE
DISPLAYS OF LIGHT."



YOU GOTTA TELL US MORE. THE LEGEND COLLINS TOLD WAS A LOT MORE COMPLEX THAN YOUR LITTLE STORY.

YEAH...THERE'S THE ISSUE OF HEATHERFIELD AS A CITY WHERE THE **FIVE ELEMENTAL FORCES** CONVERGE. NOT TO MENTION LUDMOORE'S EXPERIMENTS TO ENSNARE THEM...

...AND THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE GOOD AND THE BAD PARTS OF THE ELEMENTS.

YOU HAVE TO TELL US WHY...

...OUR POWERS ARE GETTING OUT OF CONTROL. A LOT'S MISSING!

THAT IS ALL. NOW IT IS UP TO YOU!

ARE YOU KIDDING?



I CANNOT CAST FURTHER LIGHT ON THOSE ISSUES.

THE CHANGES YOU NOTICED HAVE **NOTHING TO DO WITH ME**, AND THE **FORTRESS IS BLIND** TO THEM.

REMEMBER THE **TEACHINGS OF THE TRANSMUTING CARDS?** IT'S NOT KANDRAKAR BUT THE **ELEMENTS THEMSELVES** THAT...



...ARE
TESTING
US.

oof!

WELL, YOU
KNOW WHAT?

I WANNA TEST
YOU TOO...

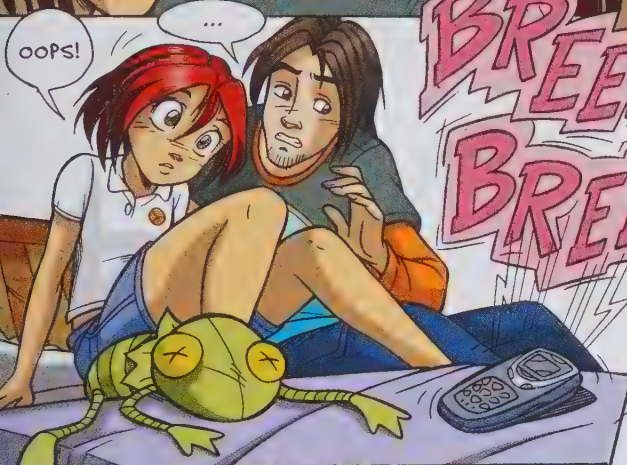
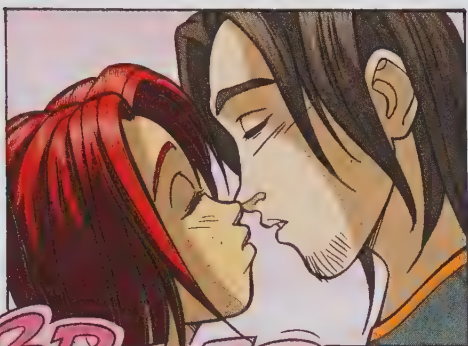
?

...THE TICKLING
TEST!

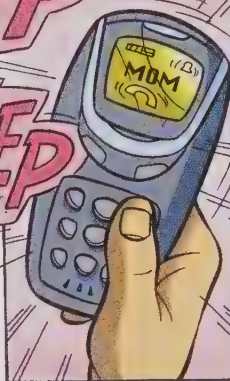
AAAH!

HEE-HEE-HEE!
THAT'S NOT FAIR!

HA-HA-HA!
STOP, MATT!
I GIVE UP!



BREEEP
BREEEP



...TO PREPARE
THE DINNER WE'D PLANNED.
COULD YOU PLEASE TELL DEAN
WE'LL HAVE TO POSTPONE
THE CELEBRATION?



SURE, BUT...

I gotta go! See you later, honey!

!!

CLICK

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

YOU KNOW HOW TO COOK, RIGHT?

HANG ON. YOU'RE PLANNING NOT TO TELL COLLINS AND MAKE DINNER YOURSELF?

THAT'S RIGHT!

I'LL SURPRISE BOTH OF THEM!

WELL... FAR BE IT FROM ME TO QUESTION YOUR...*CULINARY ABILITIES*, BUT...

DON'T WORRY, MATT. I'LL FOLLOW THE RECIPE IN MY MOM'S COOKBOOK. IT'S HERE SOMEWHERE...

First cupboard on the left, on top of the canned vegetables.

PRECISELY!

GROAN! Off to a great start.

"AND IT DOESN'T
TASTE ANY BETTER!"

SEE? I CAN
EVEN CUT ONIONS
WITHOUT CRYING!

MAYBE
BECAUSE...



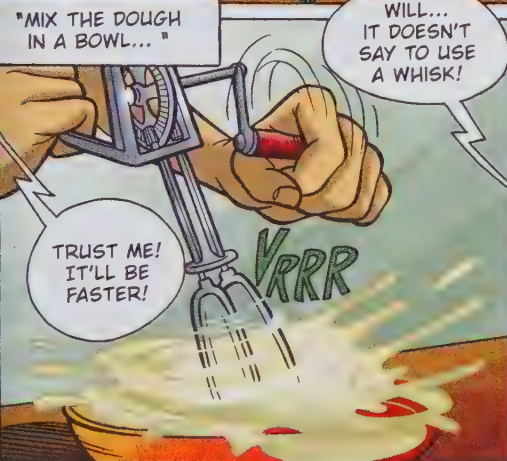
...THAT'S NOT
AN ONION. IT'S
FENNEL.

oops!



"MIX THE DOUGH
IN A BOWL..."

WILL...
IT DOESN'T
SAY TO USE
A WHISK!



TRUST ME!
IT'LL BE
FASTER!

PERFECT!
WHAT NEXT?

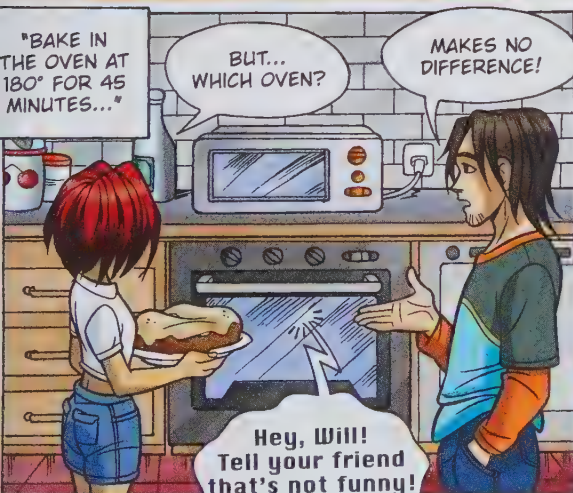
IF YOU CAN
STILL READ...



"BAKE IN
THE OVEN AT
180° FOR 45
MINUTES..."

BUT...
WHICH OVEN?

MAKES NO
DIFFERENCE!



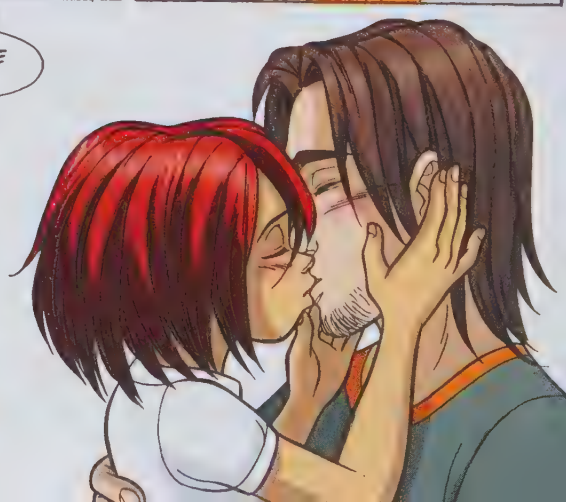
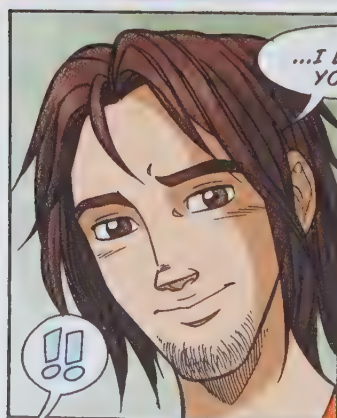
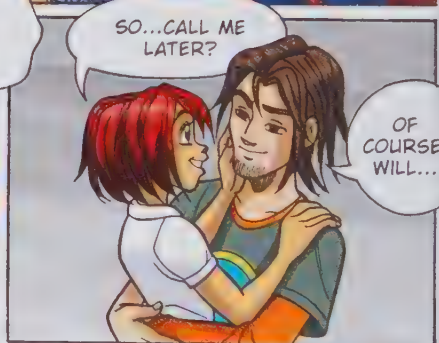
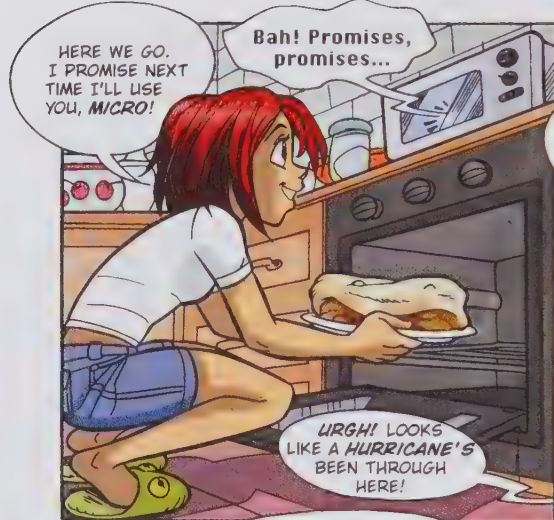
Hey, Will!
Tell your friend
that's not funny!

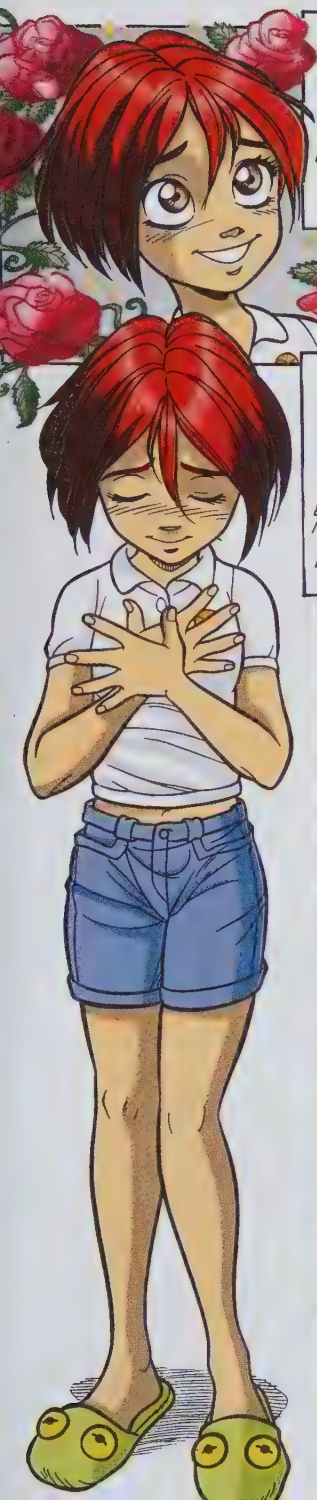
I'M the REAL oven
here! MICRO is just
a SURROGATE!

Arrogant
as usual! I'M
the QUICKEST
and MOST
PRACTICAL!

UM...
CHILL,
YOU GUYS!
NO NEED
TO GET SO
HEATED!

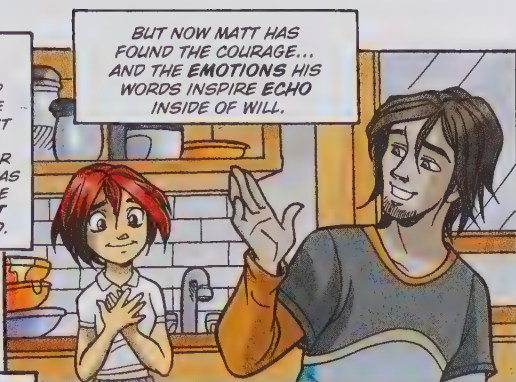






"I LOVE YOU!"
MATT AND
WILL HAVE
THOUGHT IT
OFTEN...
BUT SO FAR
NEITHER HAS
BEEN ABLE TO
SAY IT
OUT LOUD.

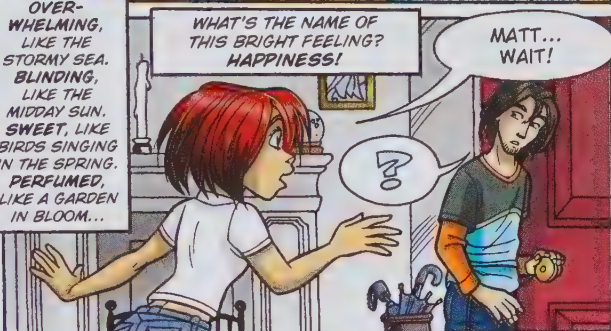
BUT NOW MATT HAS
FOUND THE COURAGE...
AND THE EMOTIONS HIS
WORDS INSPIRE ECHO
INSIDE OF WILL.



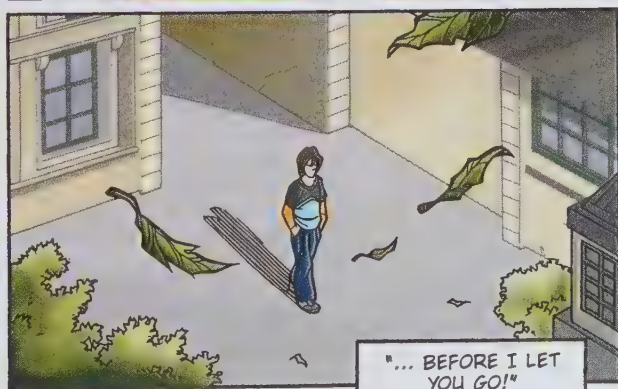
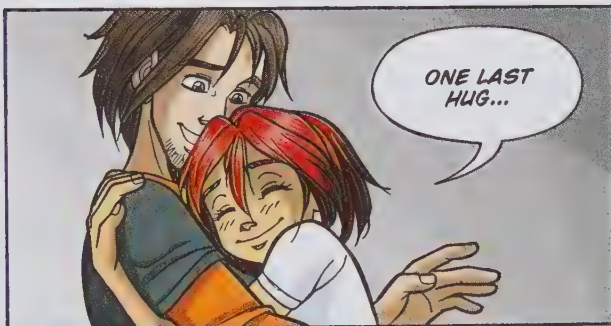
OVER-
WHELMING,
LIKE THE
STORMY SEA.
BLINDING,
LIKE THE
MIDDAY SUN.
SWEET, LIKE
BIRDS SINGING
IN THE SPRING.
PERFUMED,
LIKE A GARDEN
IN BLOOM...

WHAT'S THE NAME OF
THIS BRIGHT FEELING?
HAPPINESS!

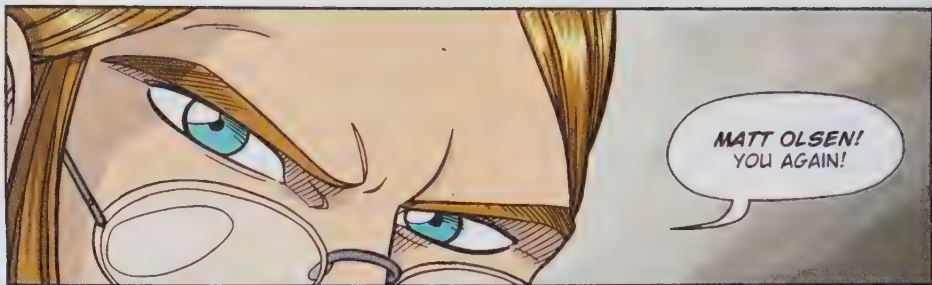
MATT...
WAIT!



ONE LAST
HUG...



"... BEFORE I LET
YOU GO!"



MATT OLSEN!
YOU AGAIN!



THAT
KID ALWAYS
SEEMS TO BE
PESTERING
ME.

BING

I CAN'T STAND HIM.
I THOUGHT I COULD
FINALLY HAVE...



...A MOMENT
OF PEACE!

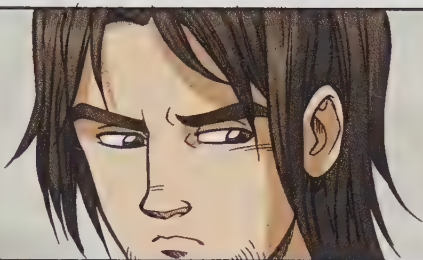
I CAME TO GET MY
BOOKS...THE ONES
I...UM...LEFT
LAST TIME.

...HELLO.



I'M ABOUT
TO CLOSE, OLSEN.
AS YOU CAN SEE,
THE BOOKSHOP IS
EMPTY, AND...

WAIT...OF COURSE!
CLOSING TIME—
NO CUSTOMERS,
JUST ME AND
THE BOY...



NO WITNESSES. IT'S
THE PERFECT MOMENT
FOR MY PLAN!

I GET IT. YOU
WANNA SEND ME AWAY
EMPTY-HANDED.

OKAY, I'LL
COME BACK SOME
OTHER TIME.

You're not
going anywhere,
you ARROGANT,
INSOLENT BOY!

D-DID YOU SAY
SOMETHING?

JUST THAT
I WASN'T
EXPECTING YOU
SO LATE, SO
I PUT YOUR
BOOKS
AWAY.

IF YOU HAVE A MINUTE,
WE CAN GO GET THEM
RIGHT AWAY.

O-
OKAY...

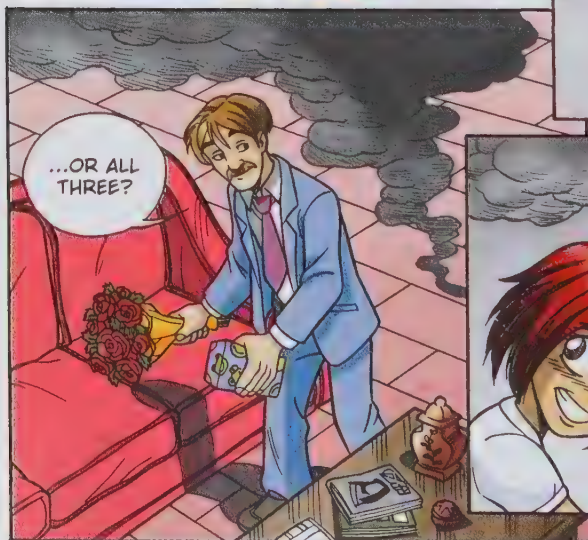
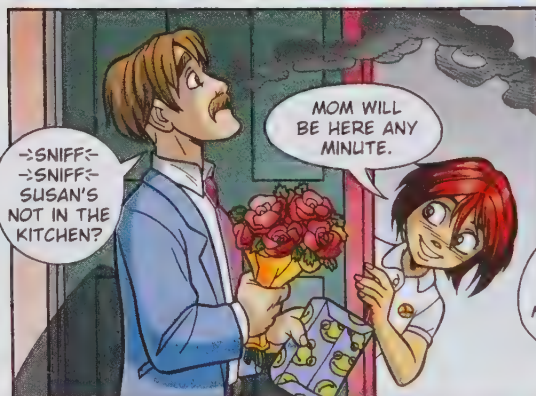
FOLLOW ME,
BOY.

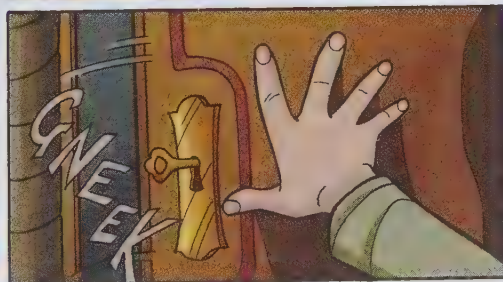
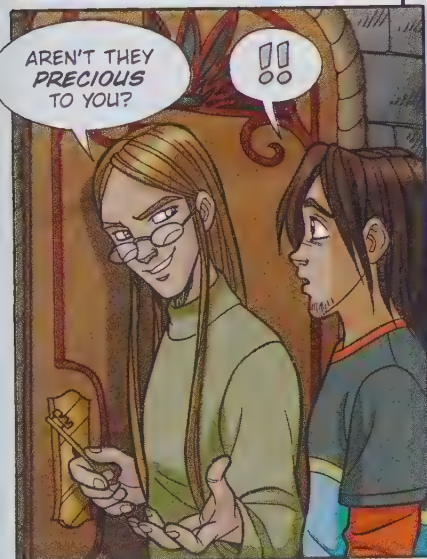
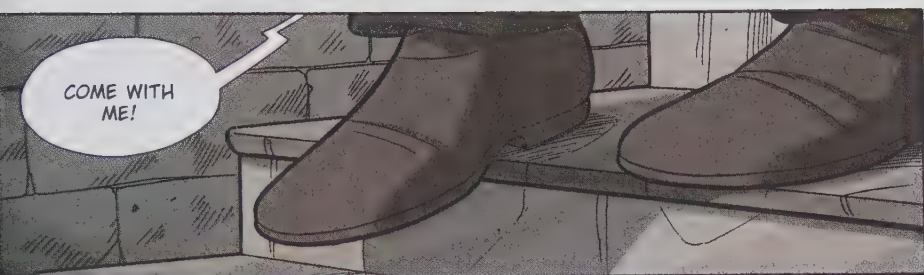
DOWN
DOWN

MEANWHILE,
AT THE VANDOM
RESIDENCE...

HI, WILL.

PROF!
YOU'RE EARLY.

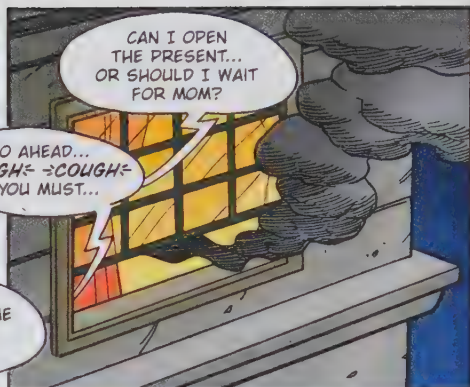




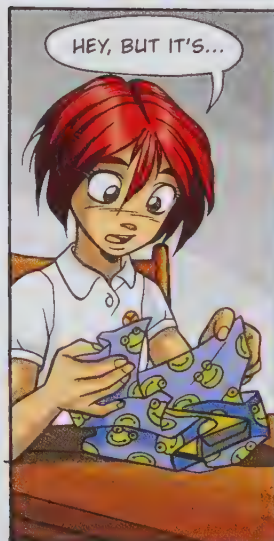


≡COUGH≡
LET'S GET SOME
FRESH AIR IN,
HUH, WILL?

GO AHEAD...
≡COUGH≡ ≡COUGH≡
IF YOU MUST...



CAN I OPEN
THE PRESENT...
OR SHOULD I WAIT
FOR MOM?



HEY, BUT IT'S...

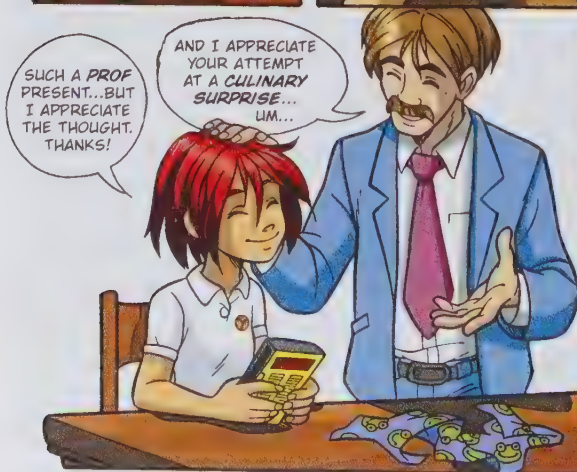


...A
DOCUMENTARY
ABOUT FROGS?

SUSAN ALWAYS
SAYS YOU'RE CRAZY
ABOUT THEM.



FROGS, SURE...
DOCUMENTARIES
NOT SO MUCH!



SUCH A *PROF*
PRESENT...BUT
I APPRECIATE
THE THOUGHT.
THANKS!

AND I APPRECIATE
YOUR ATTEMPT
AT A *CULINARY*
SURPRISE...
UM...



BUT NOW
WE MUST FIND
A *SOLUTION* SO
SUSAN FINDS
DINNER READY.

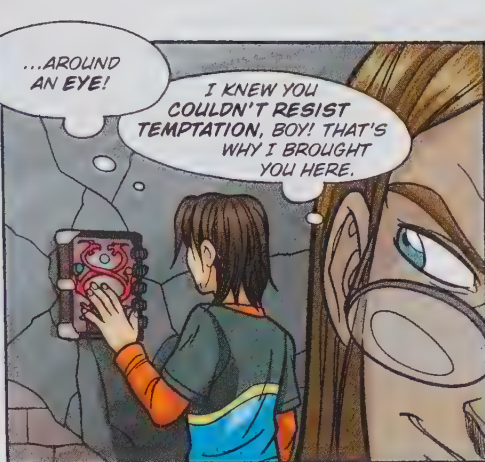
HOW ABOUT
TAKEOUT?

I SAY...
SILVER
DRAGON!



A DRAGON...

WHOOPS! UM...
SORRY. I GOT *CURIOUS*
ABOUT THIS BOOK AND...

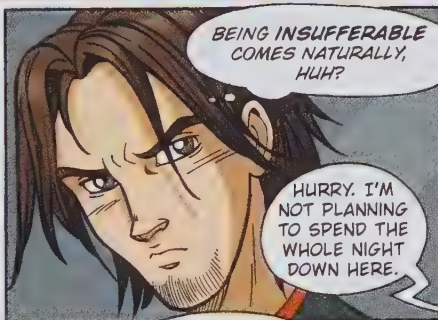


...AROUND
AN EYE!

I KNEW YOU
COULDN'T RESIST
TEMPTATION, BOY! THAT'S
WHY I BROUGHT
YOU HERE.

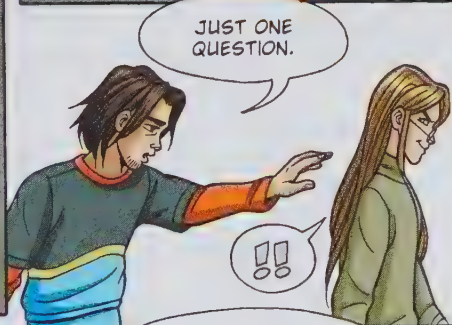


...AND
CURIOSITY
CAN STIMULATE
KNOWLEDGE.

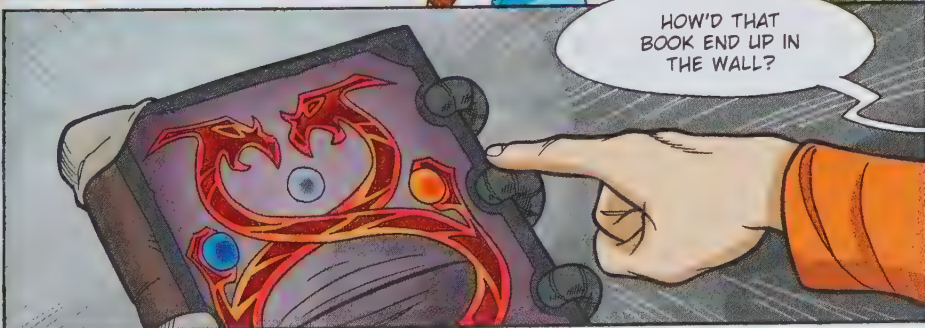


BEING INSUFFERABLE
COMES NATURALLY,
HUH?

HURRY. I'M
NOT PLANNING
TO SPEND THE
WHOLE NIGHT
DOWN HERE.



JUST ONE
QUESTION.



HOW'D THAT
BOOK END UP IN
THE WALL?

"CONGRATULATIONS, LORD CEDRIC. YOUR DEVILISH PLAN IS WORKING!"



"BEING ALONE WITH MATT IN THE BOOKSHOP AND LURING HIM INTO THE BASEMENT."

"TICKLING HIS CURIOSITY ABOUT THE BOOK..."



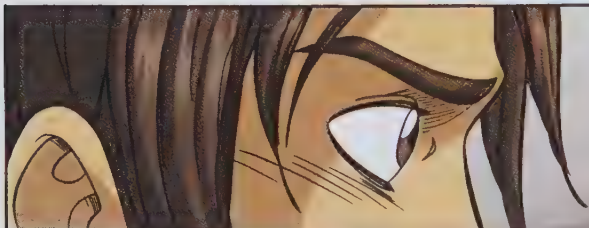
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, BOY.



"... TO THE POINT THAT HE'LL TRY TO OPEN IT AS SOON AS I FIND AN EXCUSE TO LEAVE!"

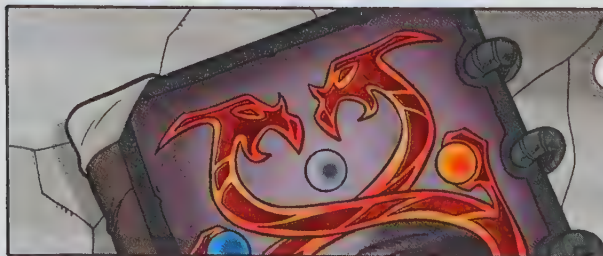
NOW STEP AWAY FROM THAT WALL!

!!

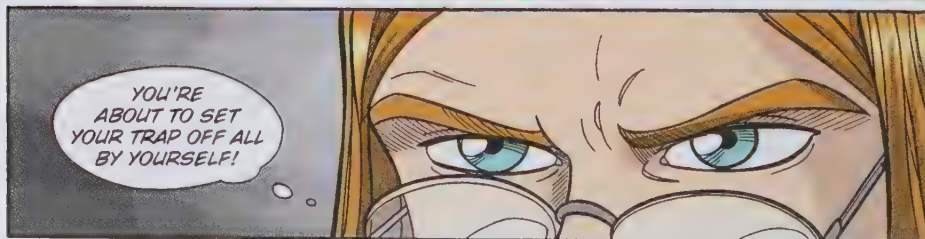


THAT'S... A MAGICAL BOOK, ISN'T IT?

WELL DONE, OLSEN. STRAIGHT INTO THE SPIDER'S WEB!



YOU'RE ABOUT TO SET YOUR TRAP OFF ALL BY YOURSELF!



"I JUST HAD TO PRETEND
TO WANT YOU TO STAY
AWAY FROM THE BOOK TO
MAKE YOU *SUSPICIOUS...*"

"THAT BOOK!
IT MUST CONTAIN
SUPER-SECRET INFO
IF CEDRIC IS AFRAID OF
ME LOOKING AT IT.

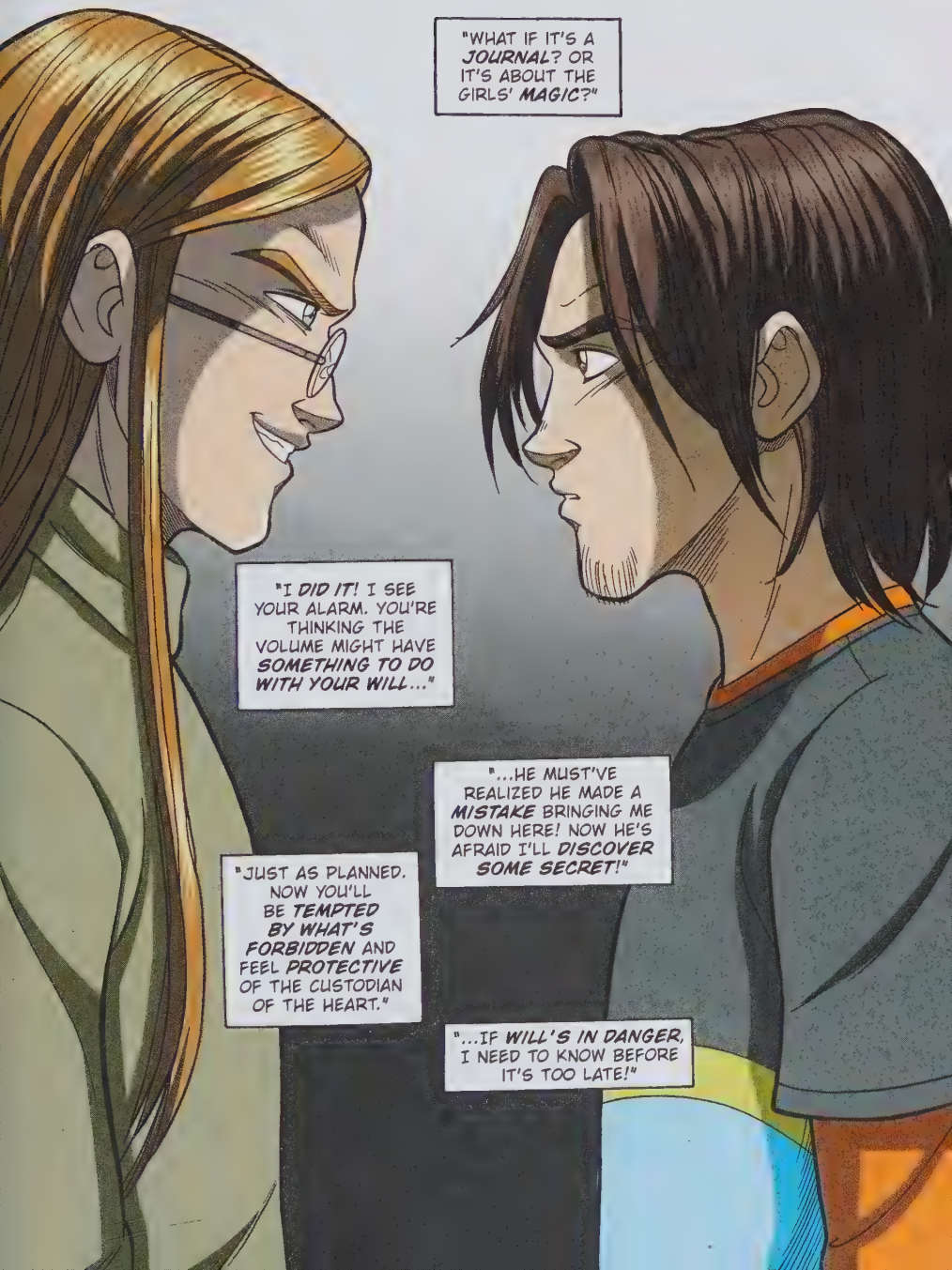
"WHAT IF IT'S A
JOURNAL? OR
IT'S ABOUT THE
GIRLS' *MAGIC?*"

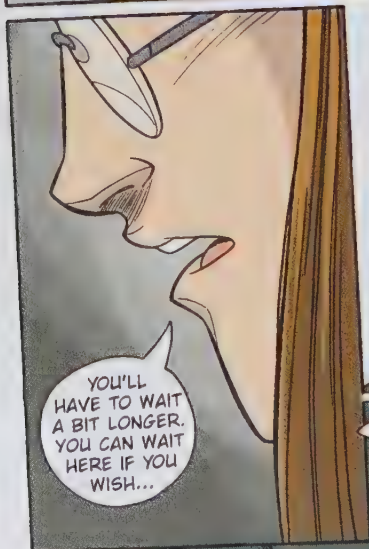
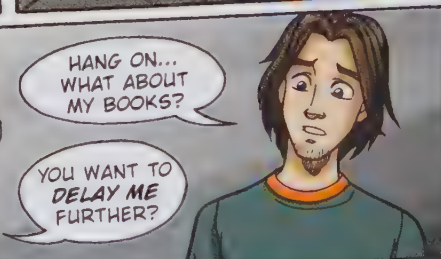
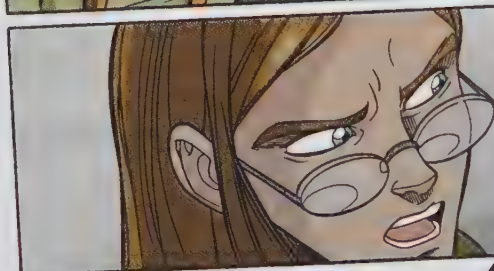
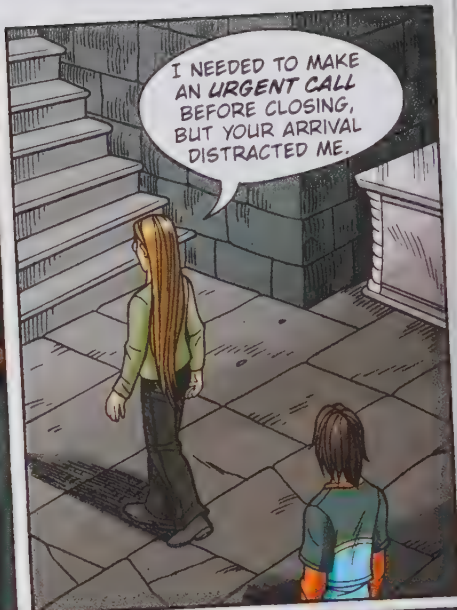
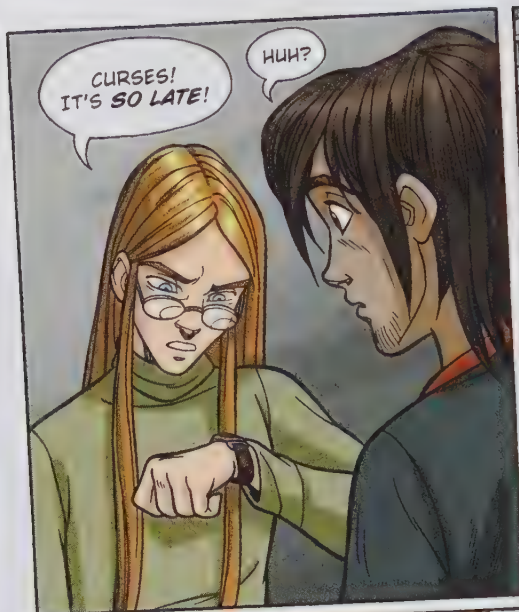
"I DID IT! I SEE
YOUR ALARM. YOU'RE
THINKING THE
VOLUME MIGHT HAVE
SOMETHING TO DO
WITH YOUR WILL..."

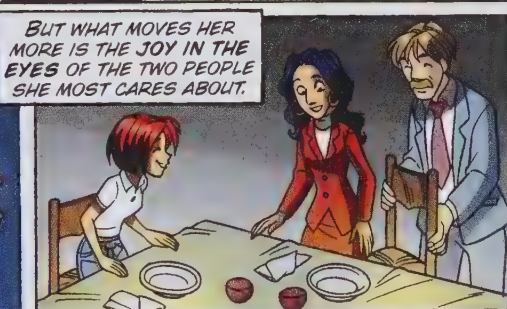
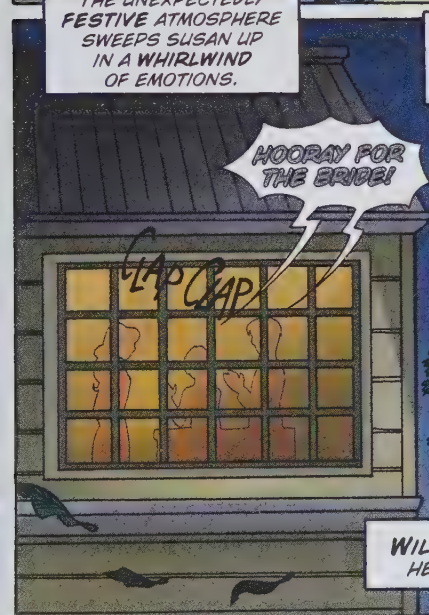
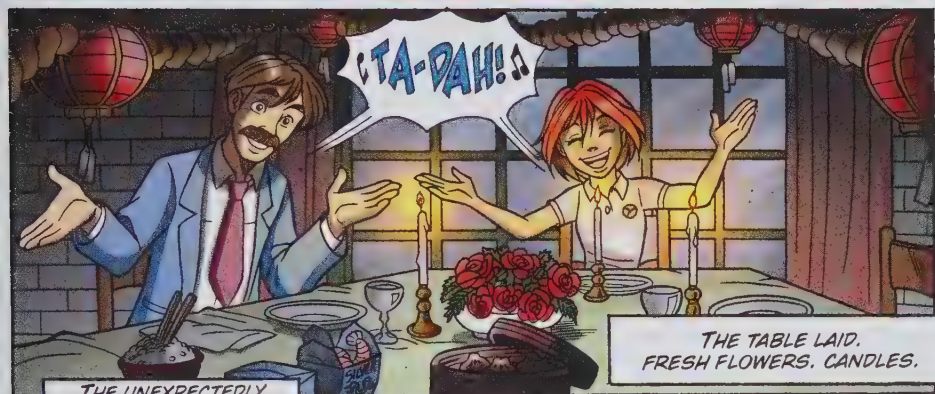
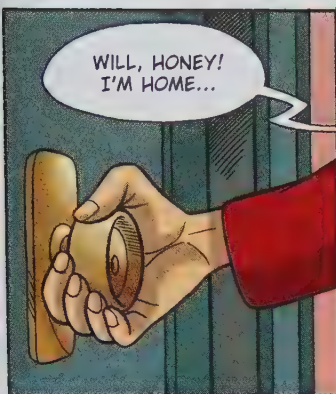
"JUST AS PLANNED.
NOW YOU'LL
BE TEMPTED
BY WHAT'S
FORBIDDEN AND
FEEL *PROTECTIVE*
OF THE CUSTODIAN
OF THE HEART."

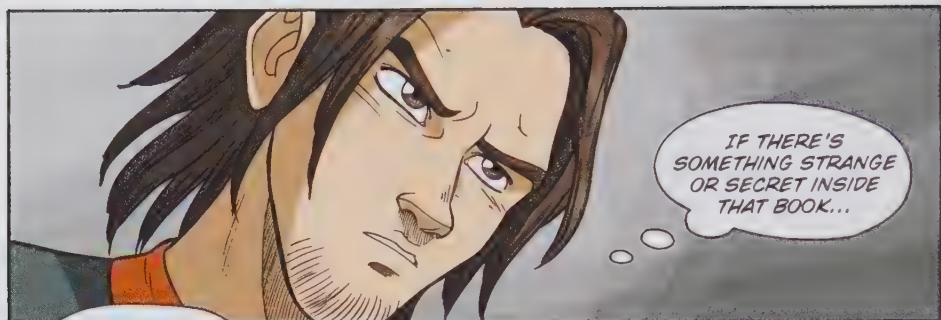
"...HE MUST'VE
REALIZED HE MADE A
MISTAKE BRINGING ME
DOWN HERE! NOW HE'S
AFRAID I'LL *DISCOVER*
SOME *SECRET!*"

"...IF *WILL'S* IN DANGER,
I NEED TO KNOW BEFORE
IT'S TOO LATE!"



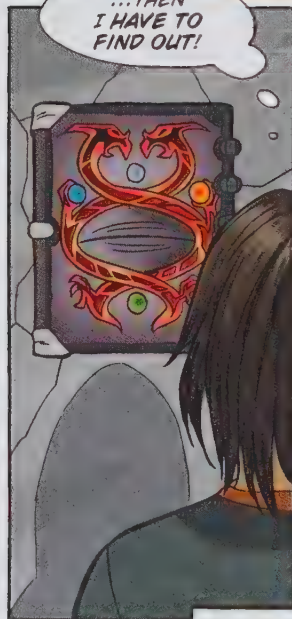






IF THERE'S
SOMETHING STRANGE
OR SECRET INSIDE
THAT BOOK...

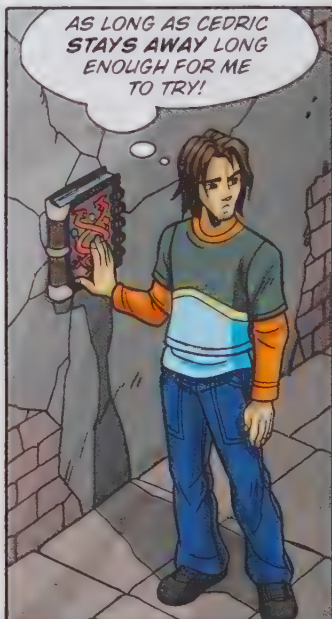
...THEN
I HAVE TO
FIND OUT!



OLD LOCKS,
CORRODED BY TIME...
BREAKING THEM
SHOULDN'T BE
TOO HARD.



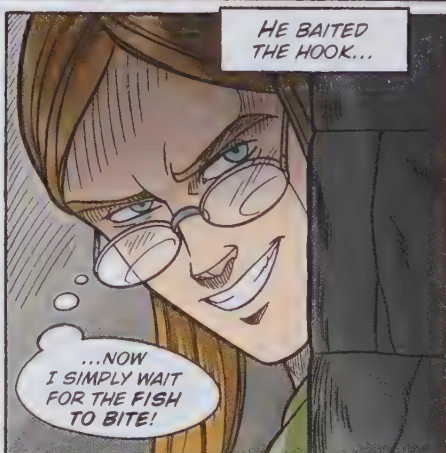
AS LONG AS CEDRIC
STAYS AWAY LONG
ENOUGH FOR ME
TO TRY!



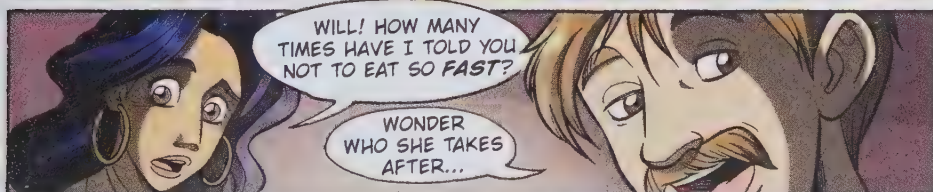
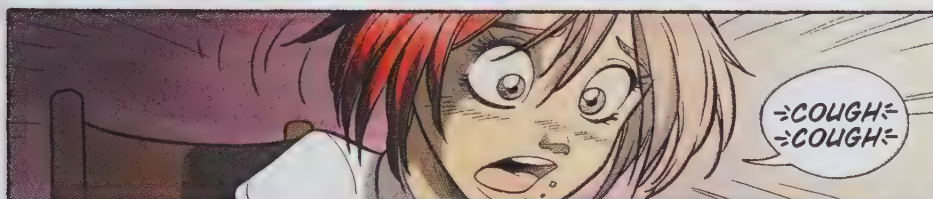
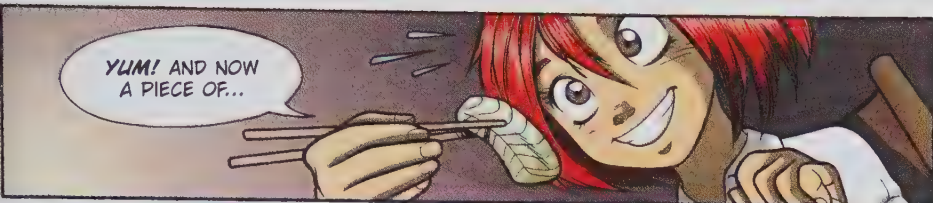
CEDRIC IS ACTUALLY **REALLY**
CLOSE...ANXIOUSLY HOPING
THAT WHAT HE AWAITS
WILL COME TO PASS.

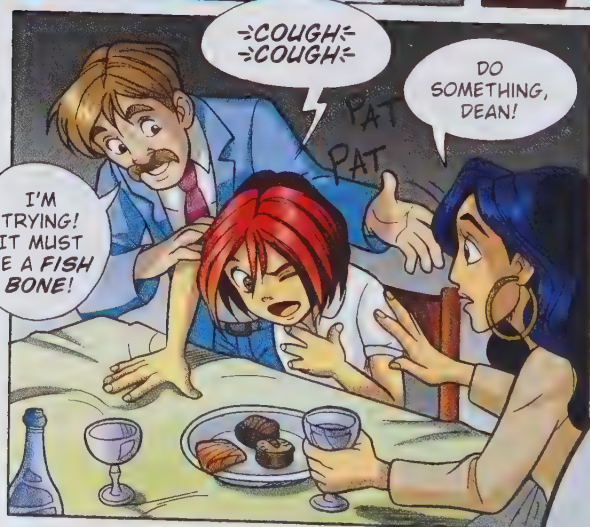


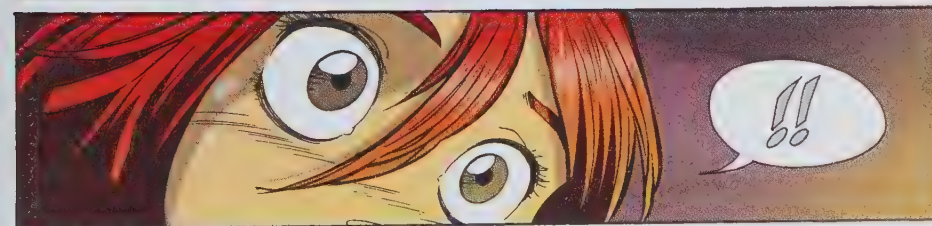
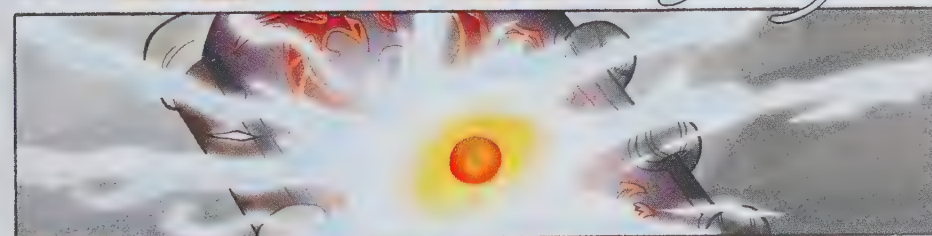
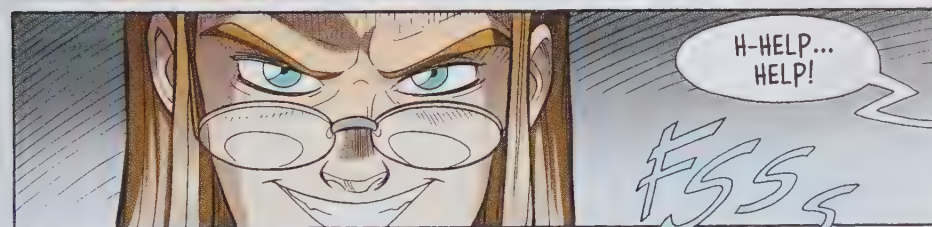
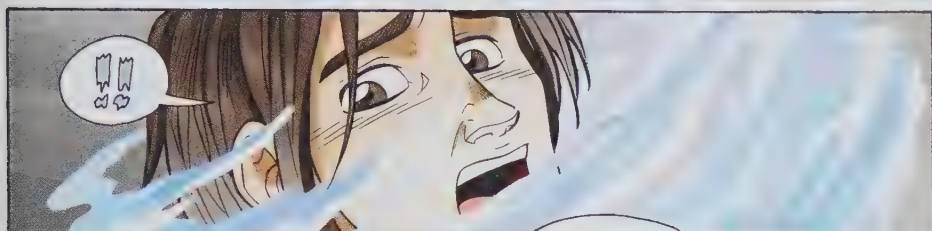
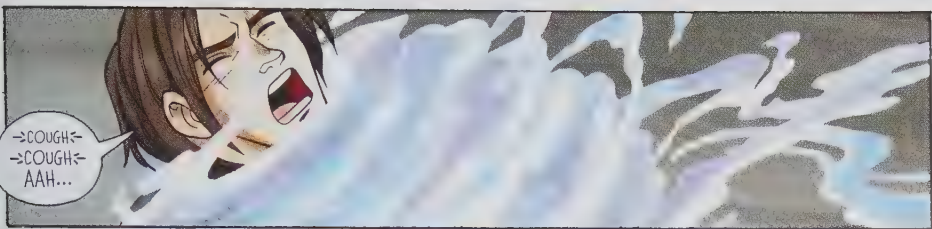
HE BAITED
THE HOOK...

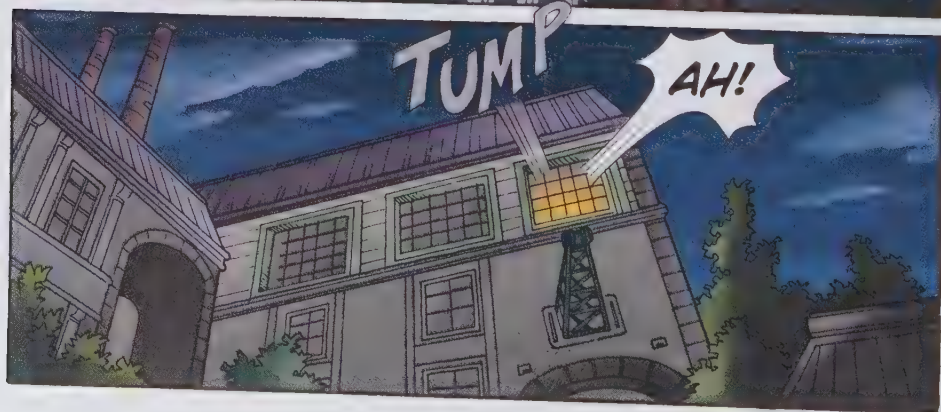
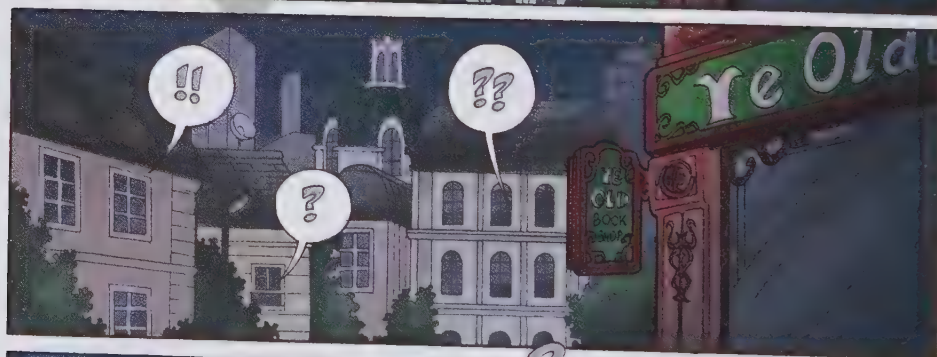


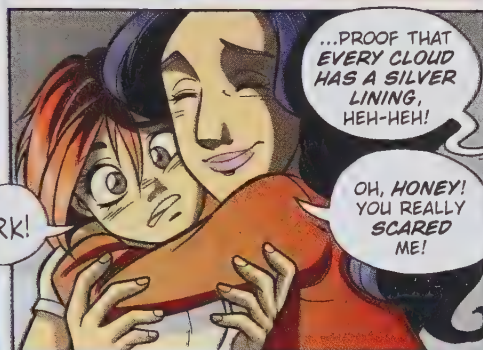
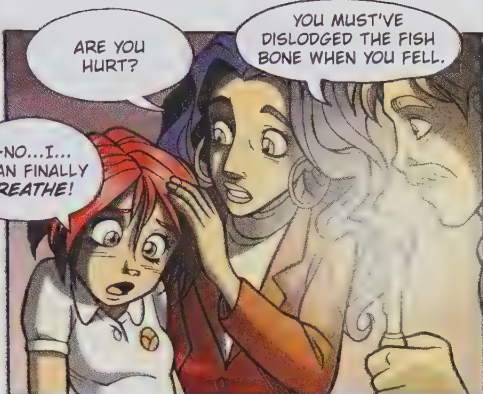
...NOW
I SIMPLY WAIT
FOR THE FISH
TO BITE!

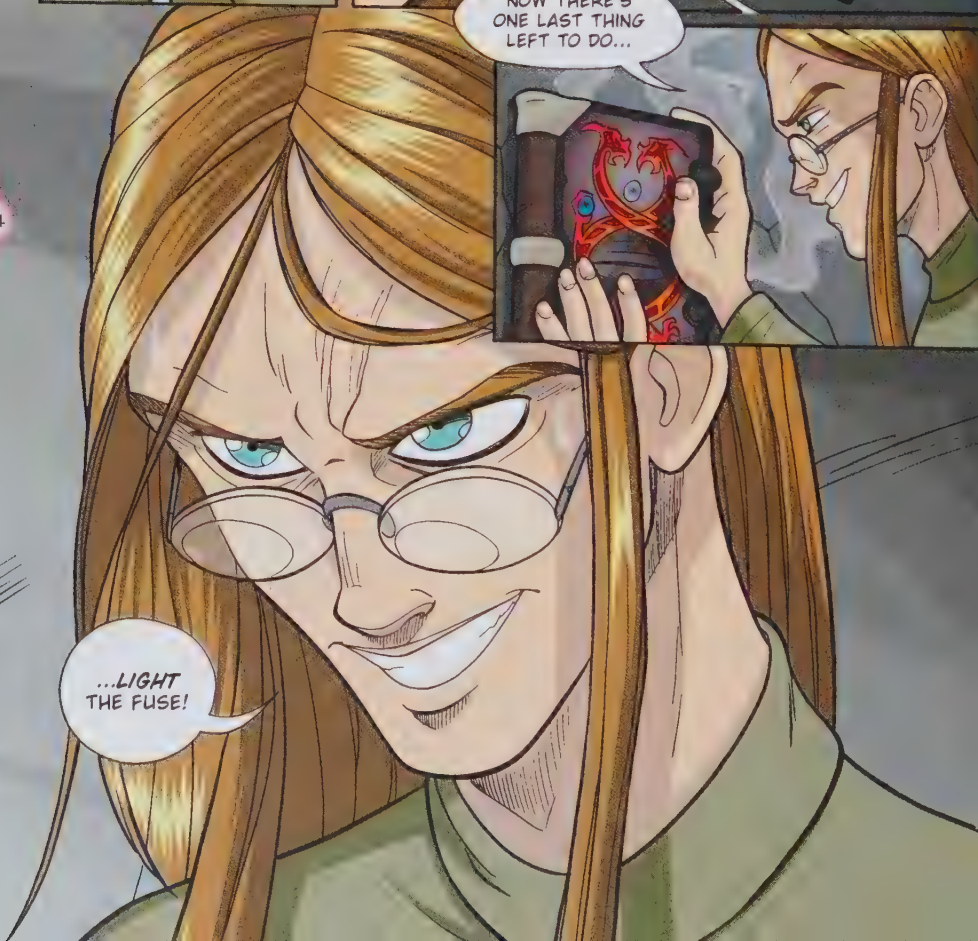
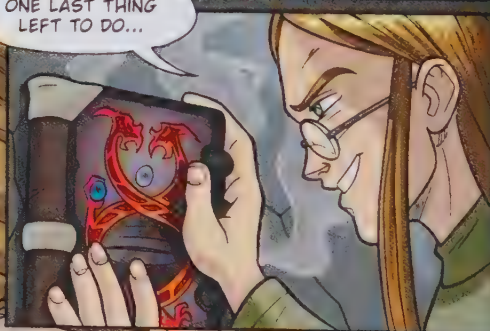
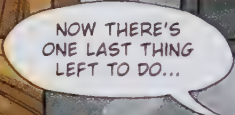
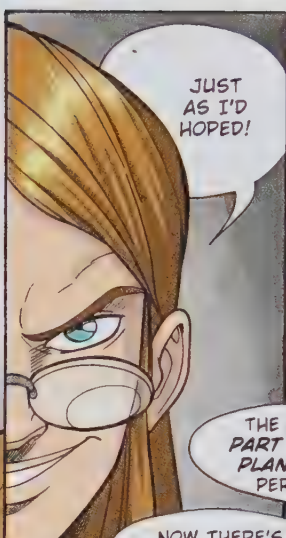


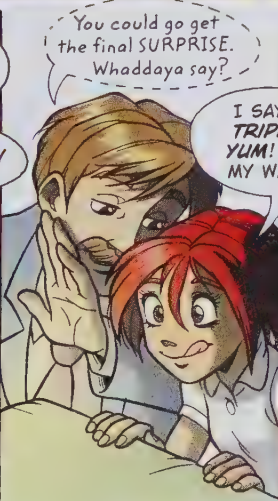
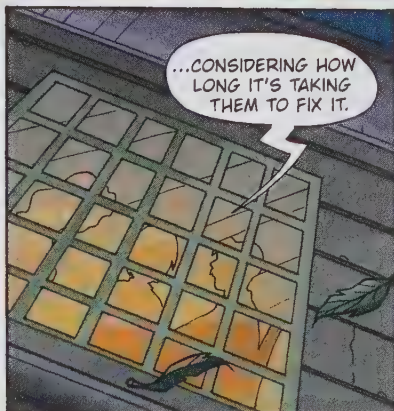
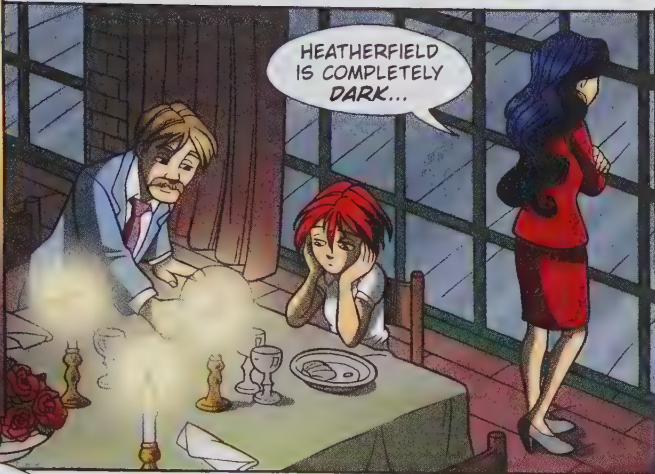














YOU'LL SEE.
SHE'LL FEEL BETTER
WHEN SHE COMES BACK
WITH THE...



...ICE
CREEEEAM!

!!



WHOOOPS!
UM...CAME BACK
TOO SOON, HUH?
SHOULD I GO
GET SOMETHING
ELSE?



WILL ONE
TUB BE ENOUGH
FOR ALL THREE
OF US?

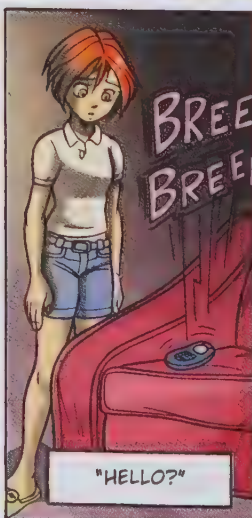
YOU PAIR OF
GLUTTONS!

I BET IT
WON'T!

BREEP
BREEP

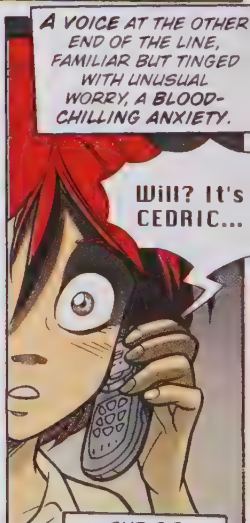


BREEP
BREEP



BREEP
BREEP

"HELLO?"



A VOICE AT THE OTHER
END OF THE LINE,
FAMILIAR BUT TINGED
WITH UNUSUAL
WORRY, A BLOOD-
CHILLING ANXIETY.

Will? It's
CEDRIC...

END OF
CHAPTER 54





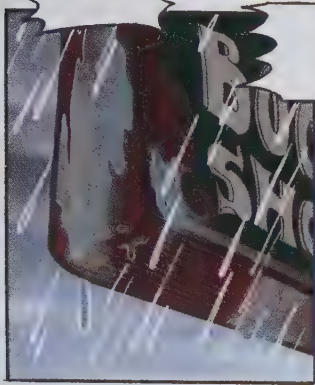
The Day After

"When facts are clear and opinions are out in the open...that's when the cracks appear."

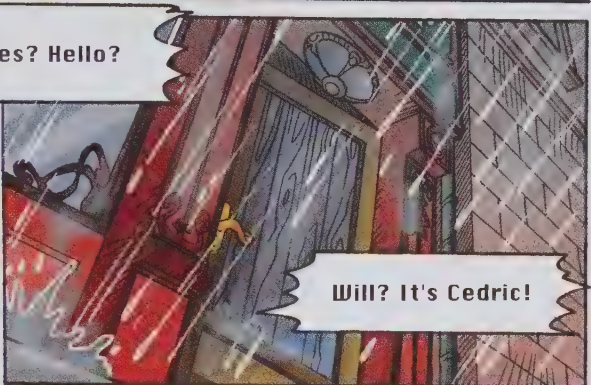
A dark, rainy street scene with tall buildings. Rain is falling heavily, creating white streaks against the dark background. The buildings have lit windows, and a clock tower is visible in the background.

Breeep...Breeep...

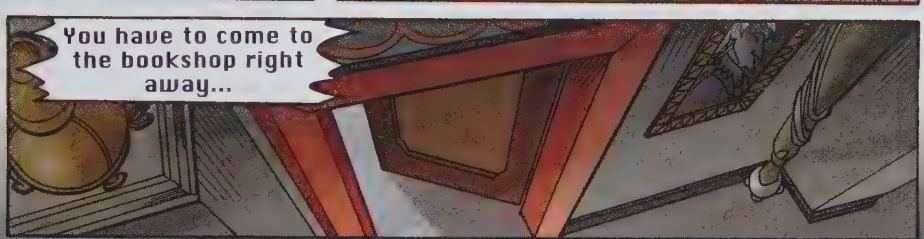
»Click«

A close-up of a red door with a brass handle. A small yellow figure is visible on the door. Rain is falling heavily.

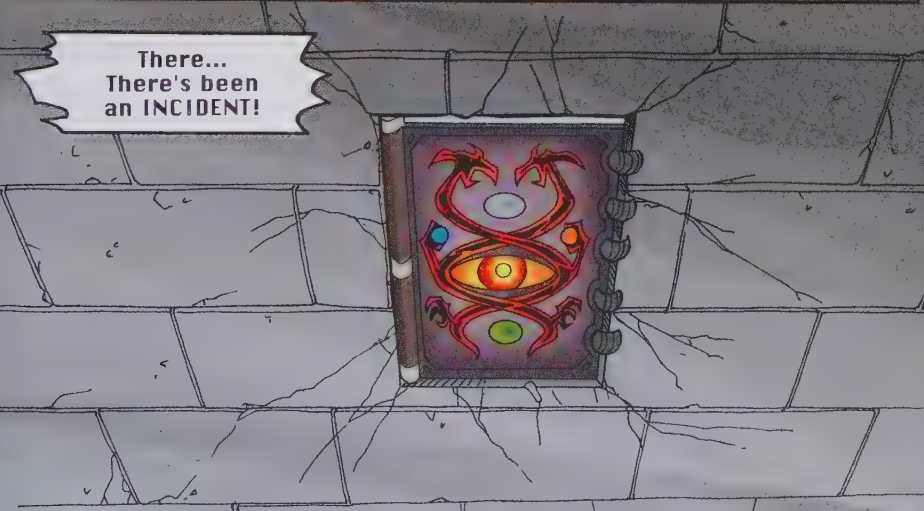
Yes? Hello?

A red door with a yellow figure on it. Rain is falling heavily.

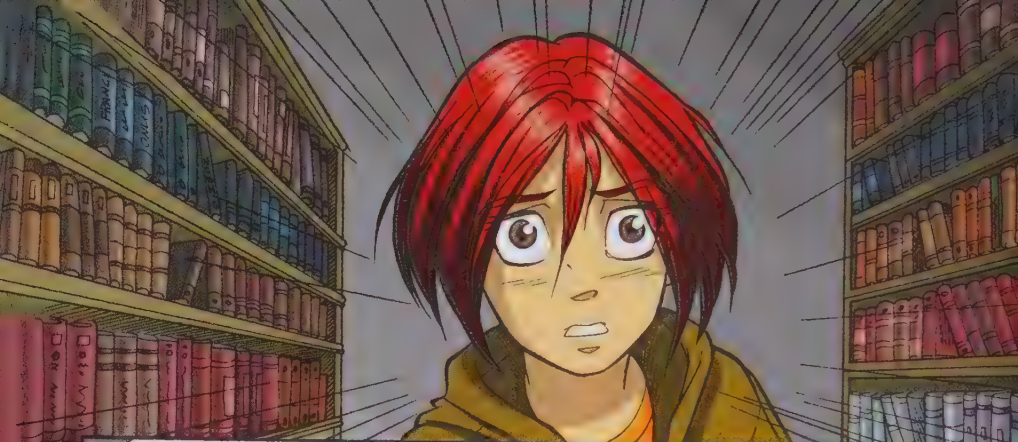
Will? It's Cedric!

A view into a bookshop from a doorway. A red door is visible. Rain is falling heavily.

You have to come to
the bookshop right
away...

A glowing book with a red and orange design on its cover, resting on a stone wall. The book is surrounded by cracks in the stone.

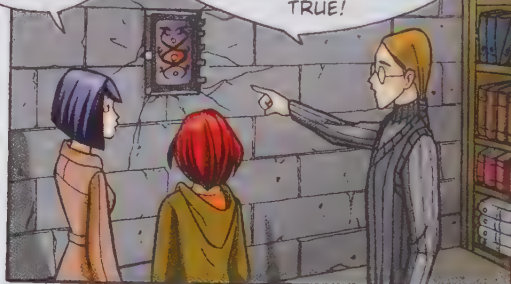
There...
There's been
an INCIDENT!



TELL ME AGAIN,
CEDRIC, BUT SLOWLY
THIS TIME!

MATT OLSEN
HAS BEEN...

...**SWALLOWED BY
THIS MAGICAL BOOK!**
I SWEAR IT'S
TRUE!

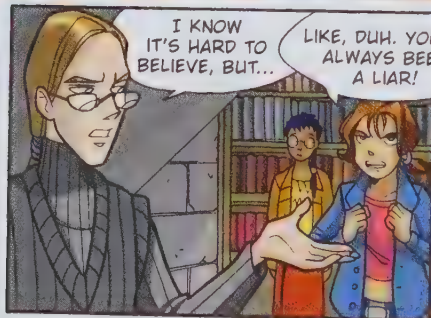


I KNOW
IT'S HARD TO
BELIEVE, BUT...

LIKE, DUH. YOU'VE
ALWAYS BEEN
A LIAR!

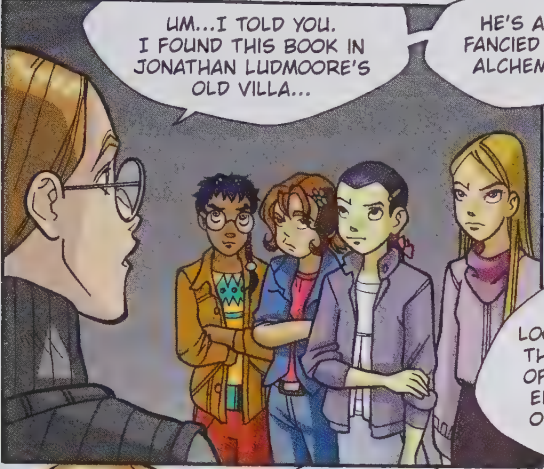
CALM DOWN,
IRMA. LET HIM
SPEAK.

THANKS,
ORUBE. I
KNEW I COULD
COUNT ON
YOU.



YOU CAN'T
COUNT ON ANYONE!
SO YOU'D BETTER
BE CONVINCING!





UM...I TOLD YOU.
I FOUND THIS BOOK IN
JONATHAN LUDMOORE'S
OLD VILLA...

HE'S A MAN WHO
FANCIED HIMSELF AN
ALCHEMIST WHO...

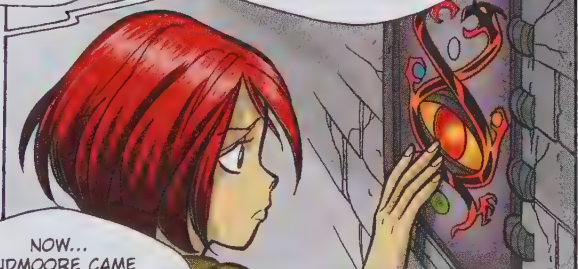


...WAS
LOOKING FOR
THE SECRET OF THE FIVE
ELEMENTS.
OLD NEWS.

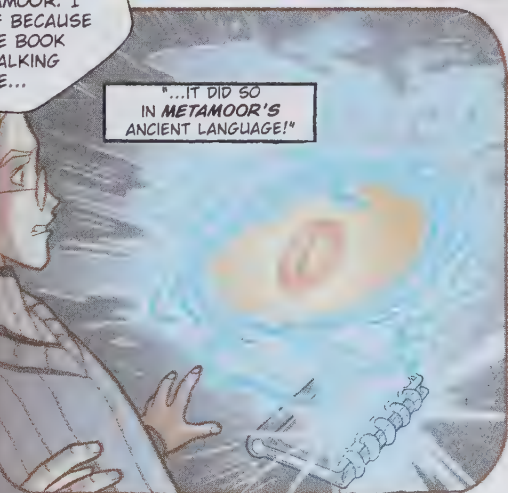


YES, TARANEE.
WHAT YOU MIGHT
NOT KNOW IS THAT
LUDMOORE RECORDED
HIS FINDINGS IN
THIS SPECIAL
BOOK...

...WHICH, IN TIME,
BECAME A **SENTIENT**
BEING. A LIVING
CREATURE!

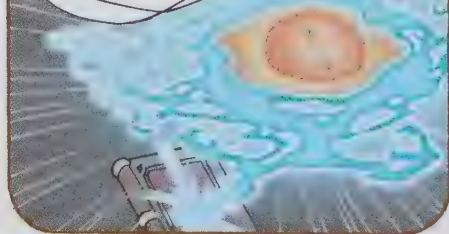


NOW...
LUDMOORE CAME
FROM METAMOR. I
HAVE PROOF BECAUSE
WHEN THE BOOK
BEGAN TALKING
TO ME...

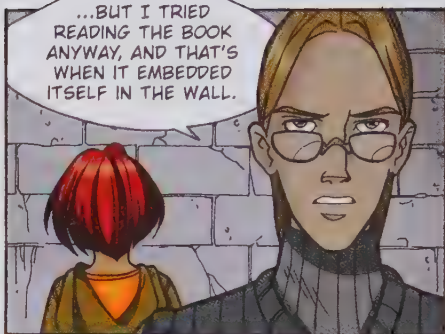


"...IT DID SO
IN **METAMOR'S**
ANCIENT LANGUAGE!"

ANY FOOLISH
MORTALS WHO TRY
TO READ THESE PAGES
WILL BE SUCKED
IN!

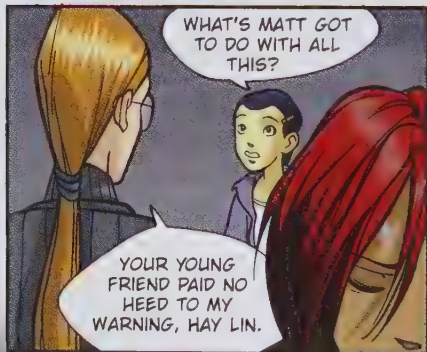


...BUT I TRIED
READING THE BOOK
ANYWAY, AND THAT'S
WHEN IT EMBEDDED
ITSELF IN THE WALL.

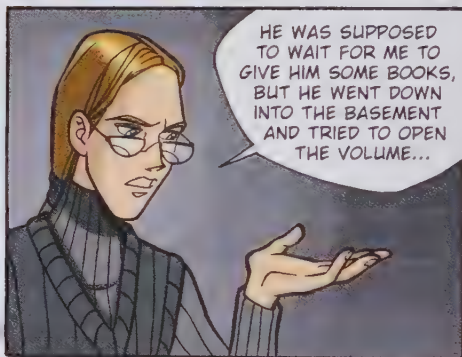


WHAT'S MATT GOT
TO DO WITH ALL
THIS?

YOUR YOUNG
FRIEND PAID NO
HEED TO MY
WARNING, HAY LIN.



HE WAS SUPPOSED
TO WAIT FOR ME TO
GIVE HIM SOME BOOKS,
BUT HE WENT DOWN
INTO THE BASEMENT
AND TRIED TO OPEN
THE VOLUME...



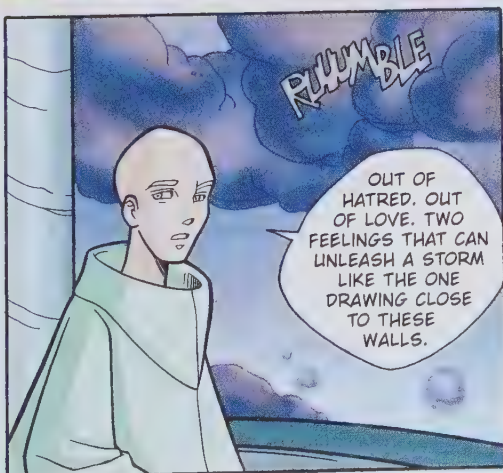
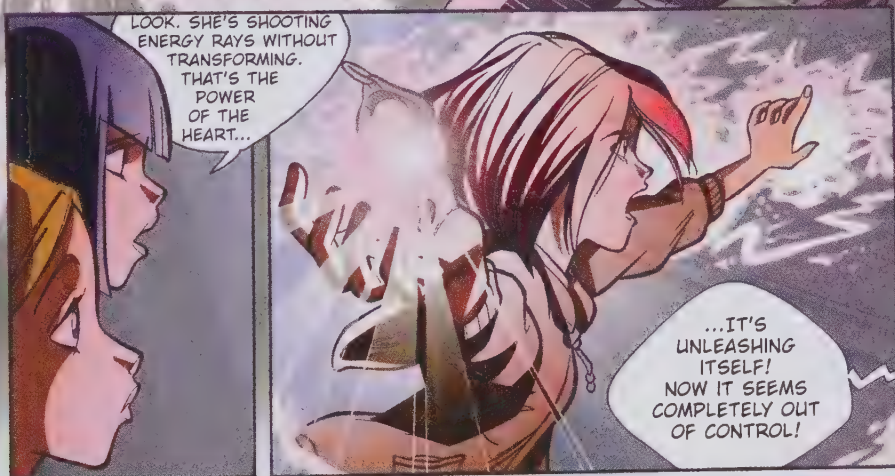
NOOOO!
YOU'RE JUST
A LIAR!

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SHAAATZZ

AAARGH!





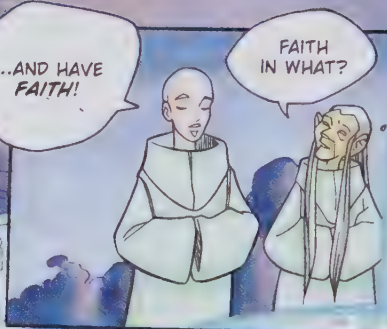


THE BOND
BETWEEN THE
HEART AND THE
FORTRESS IS THAT
STRONG?

YES,
YAN LIN, BUT
THIS TIME, WE
CAN ONLY WAIT,
WATCH FROM
AFAR...

...AND HAVE
FAITH!

FAITH
IN WHAT?



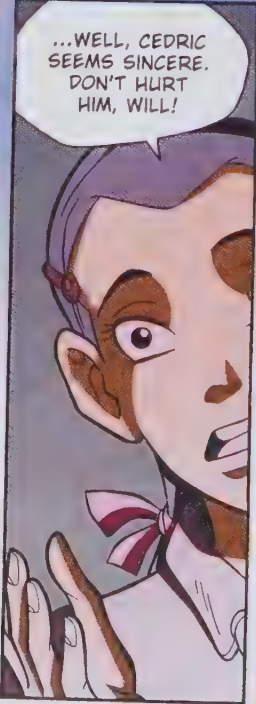
IN YOUR
GRANDDAUGHTER
HAY LIN, FOR
EXAMPLE...

WILL...
CAN YOU HEAR
ME?

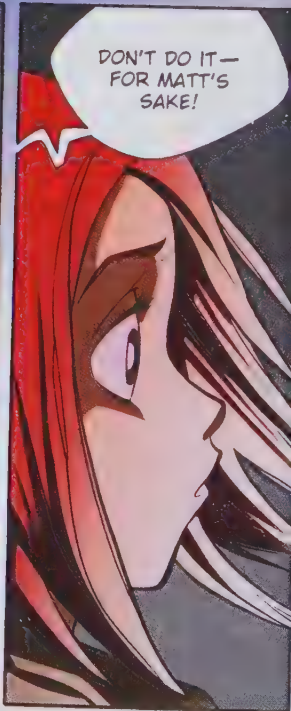


YOU KNOW
I'VE BEEN ABLE
TO SENSE WHEN
SOMEONE'S LYING
RECENTLY...

...WELL, CEDRIC
SEEMS SINCERE.
DON'T HURT
HIM, WILL!



DON'T DO IT—
FOR MATT'S
SAKE!



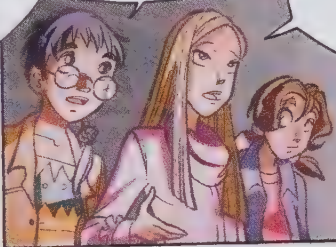


IT'S MATT
I'M THINKING
ABOUT!

BELIEVE ME!
THAT SLIMEBALL IS
A GOOD LIAR, BUT THIS
TIME, HE'S TELLING
THE TRUTH!

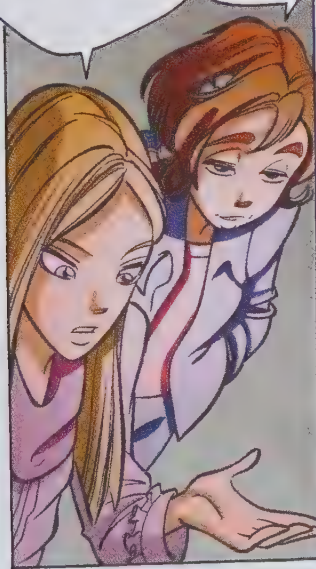


WE HAVE TO
TRUST HIM.
THINK, WILL!
THE MAGICAL
BOOK ONLY
TALKS TO
HIM.



THE VOLUME TOLD
HIM THAT FOOLISH
MORTALS WILL BE
SUCKED IN...

TRUE! LET'S
MAKE A GUESS,
AS ABSURD AS
IT MIGHT BE...



SOMEHOW
OR OTHER, MATT
COULD BE *INSIDE*
THAT BOOK.

SURE.
HE'S BECOME A
BOOKMARK!

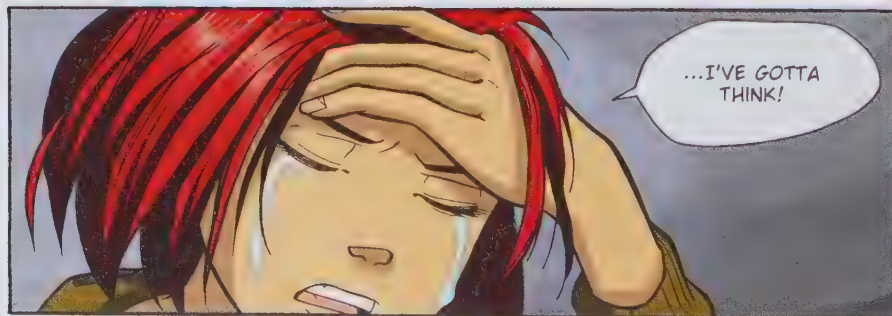
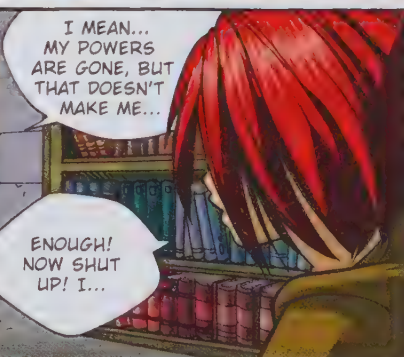
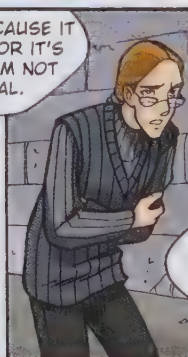
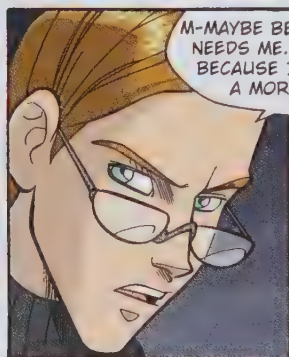
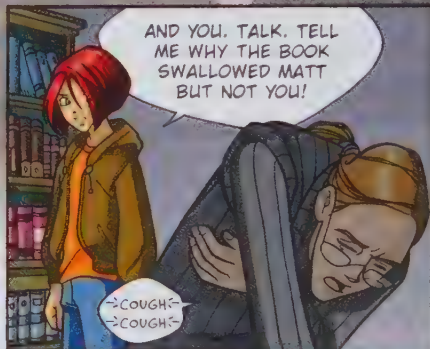
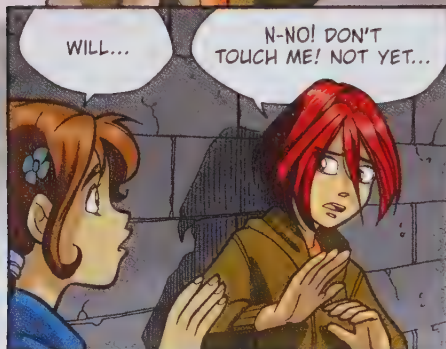
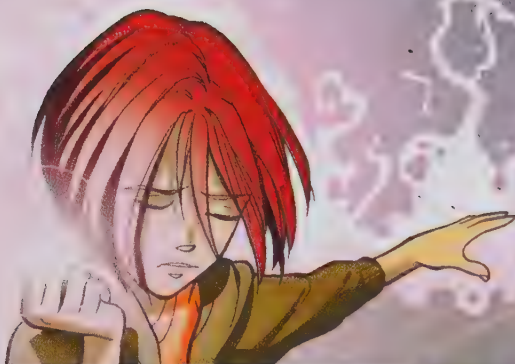


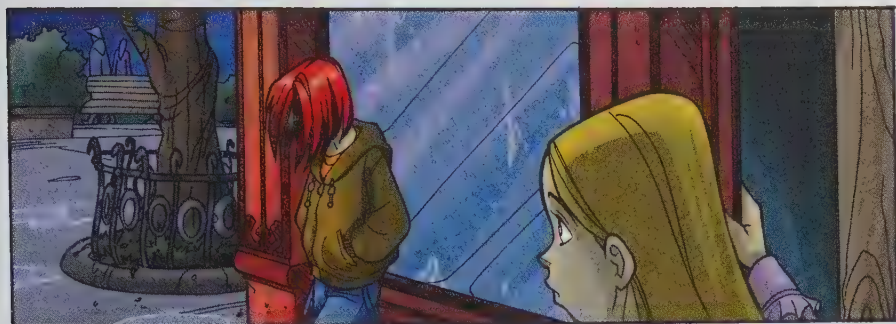
THAT'S THE
ONLY POSSIBLE
EXPLANATION.
WE'VE SEEN FAR
STRANGER
THINGS!

OW!



YEAH—
AND IF WE'RE RIGHT,
MATT'S SURVIVAL COULD
DEPEND ON CEDRIC AND US
COOPERATING WITH HIM.





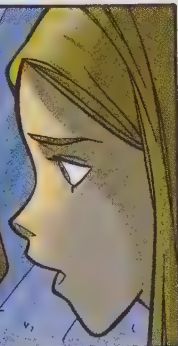
I UNDERSTAND YOUR PAIN, WILL.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME.

I COULD'VE EASILY DESTROYED HIM!

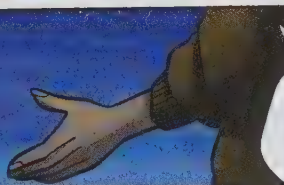
ALL THAT ANGER ISN'T YOUR FAULT...IT'S BECAUSE OF OUR OUT-OF-CONTROL POWERS.



THE ELEMENTS ARE TESTING US. IT'S A CHALLENGE THAT...

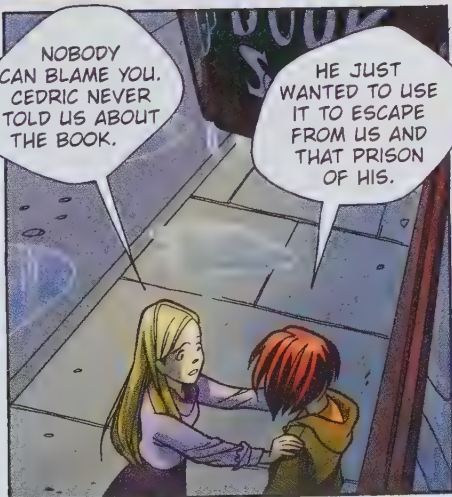


No!
THIS TIME, I DON'T THINK IT CAN ALL BE EXPLAINED AWAY LIKE THAT.

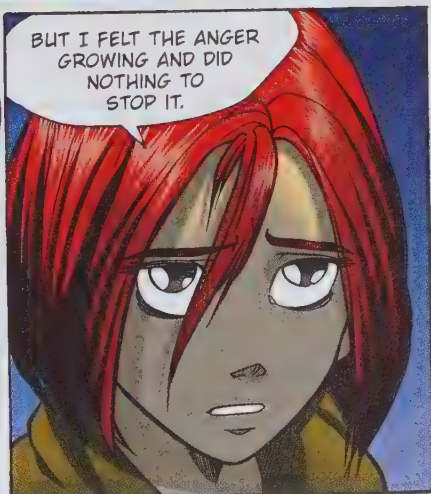


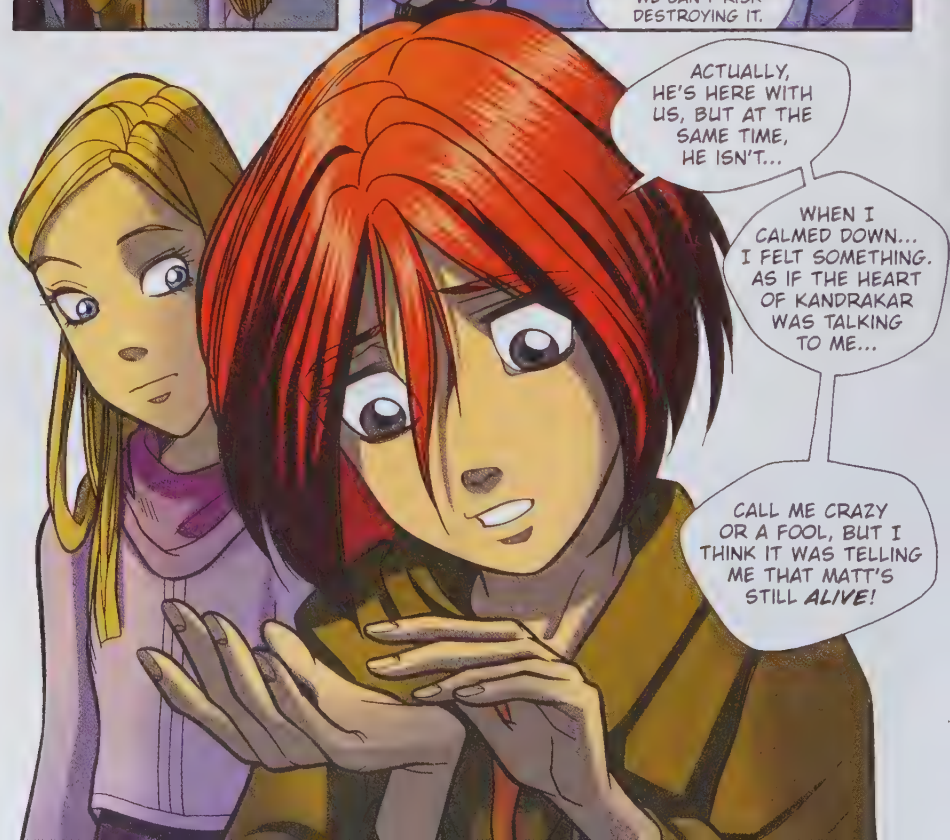
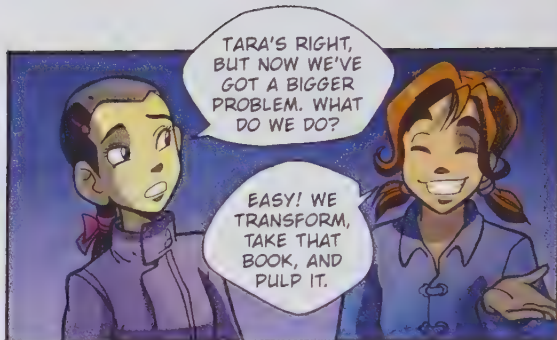
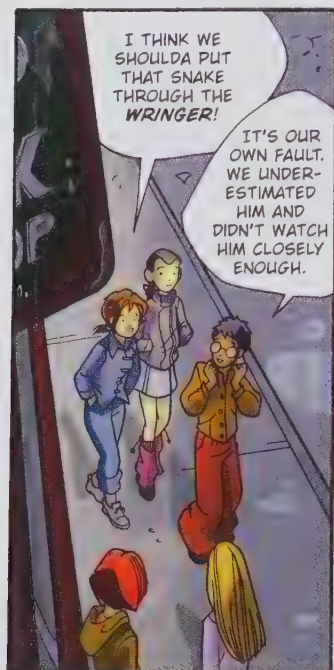
NOBODY CAN BLAME YOU. CEDRIC NEVER TOLD US ABOUT THE BOOK.

HE JUST WANTED TO USE IT TO ESCAPE FROM US AND THAT PRISON OF HIS.



BUT I FELT THE ANGER GROWING AND DID NOTHING TO STOP IT.







LOOK AT THEM,
ALL SCARED AND
CONFUSED. I WISH I
COULD CELEBRATE
RIGHT NOW...

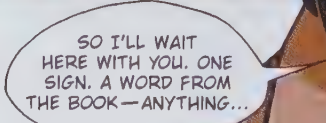
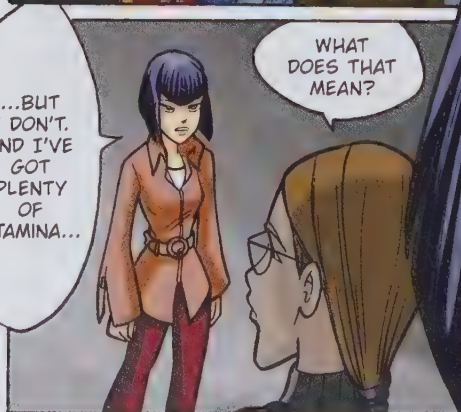
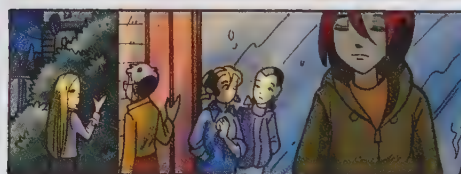
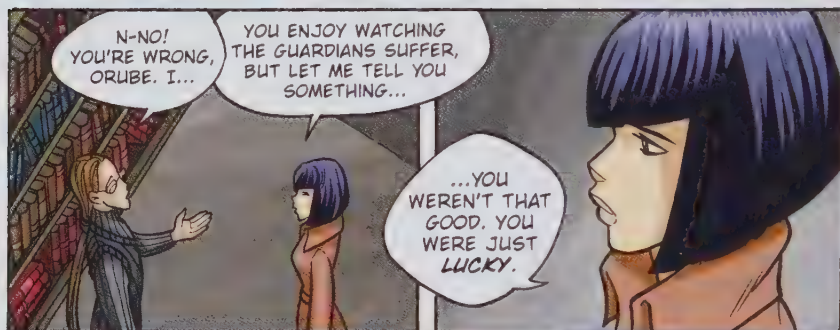
I WAS EXCELLENT,
JUST LIKE I USED TO
BE WHEN I COULD
BE MYSELF!

I TOLD THE GUARDIANS
THE TRUTH BUT LEFT
OUT SOME IMPORTANT
DETAILS...

LIKE,
FOR INSTANCE,
THE FACT THAT I
MADE A DEAL WITH THE
CREATURE TRAPPED
INSIDE THE BOOK.

IF I OPEN
THE MAGICAL
LOCKS ON THE
COVER AND ALLOW
IT TO BREAK
FREE...

...THAT MYSTERIOUS
BEING HAS PROMISED
TO GIVE ME BACK
THE POWERS
I'VE LOST.



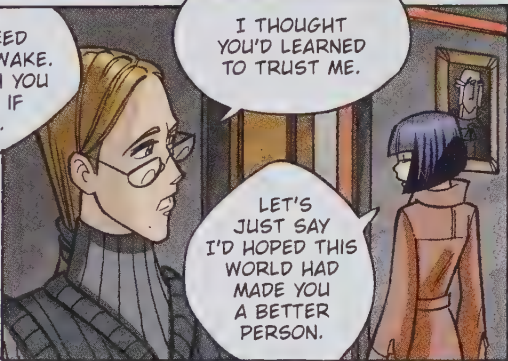


...TO FIGURE
OUT IF YOU'RE
TELLING THE
TRUTH OR JUST
BLUFFING.

FINE.
THEN I'LL
PUT ON
SOME
COFFEE.



I DON'T NEED
IT TO STAY AWAKE.
I CAN WATCH YOU
ALL NIGHT IF
NEED BE.



I THOUGHT
YOU'D LEARNED
TO TRUST ME.

LET'S
JUST SAY
I'D HOPED THIS
WORLD HAD
MADE YOU
A BETTER
PERSON.



BUT NOW I JUST THINK
I'VE BEEN *USED*, AND
I DON'T LIKE IT
AT ALL!



YOU
HEARD
HAY LIN.
I DIDN'T
LIE!

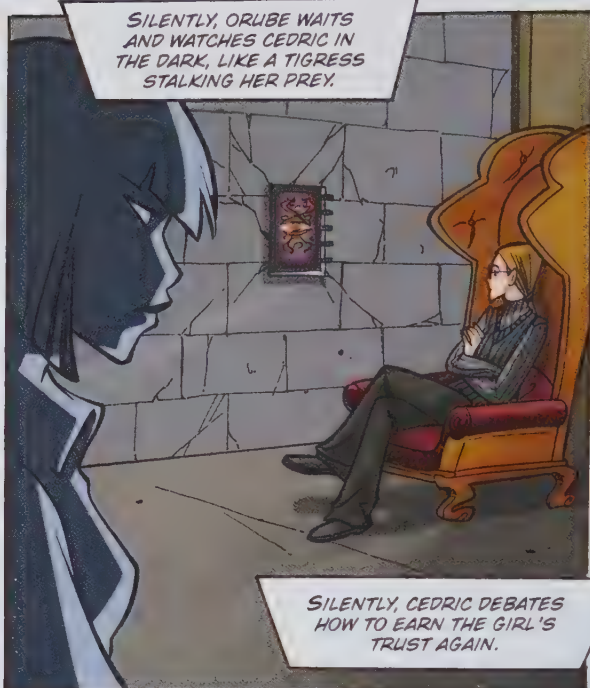
SHE'S THE ONE
WHO SAVED YOU.
ANGER IS DIFFICULT
TO CONTAIN...

...BUT
SUSPICION...
YOU HAVE TO KNOW
HOW TO MANAGE
THAT.

THUS BEGINS THE
LONGEST NIGHT,
WHICH PROCEEDS IN
UTTER SILENCE...

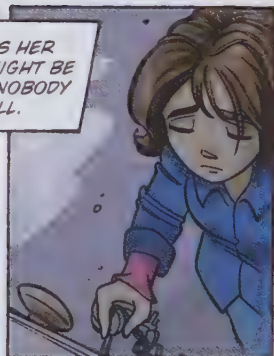
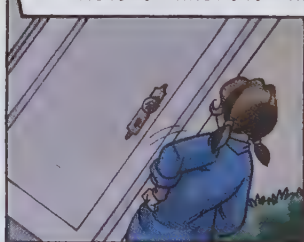


SILENTLY, ORUBE WAITS
AND WATCHES CEDRIC IN
THE DARK, LIKE A TIGRESS
STALKING HER PREY.

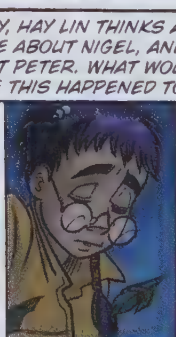


SILENTLY, CEDRIC DEBATES
HOW TO EARN THE GIRL'S
TRUST AGAIN.

SILENTLY, IRMA REMEMBERS
HER VISION. SHE GUESSED MATT MIGHT BE
IN DANGER, BUT BACK THEN, NOBODY
LISTENED...NOT EVEN WILL.



SILENTLY, HAY LIN THINKS ABOUT ERIC,
TARANEH ABOUT NIGEL, AND CORNELIA
ABOUT PETER. WHAT WOULD THEY
DO IF THIS HAPPENED TO THEM?



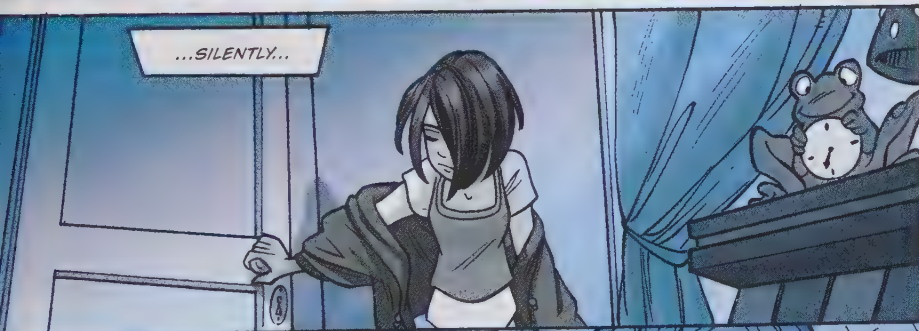
SILENTLY...



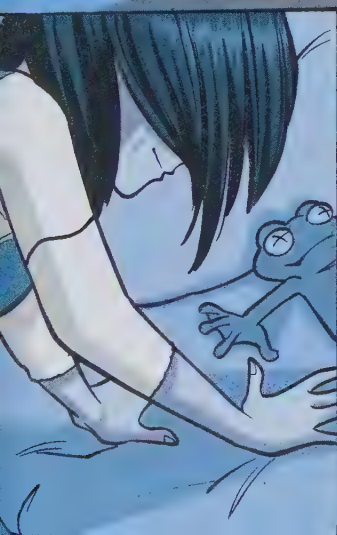
...SILENTLY...



...SILENTLY...

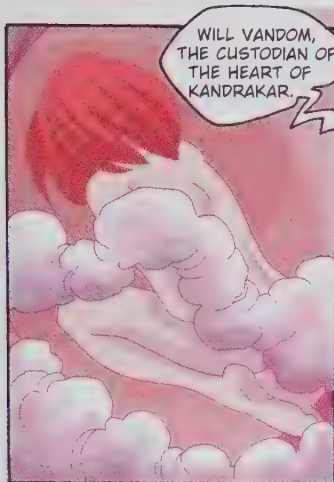


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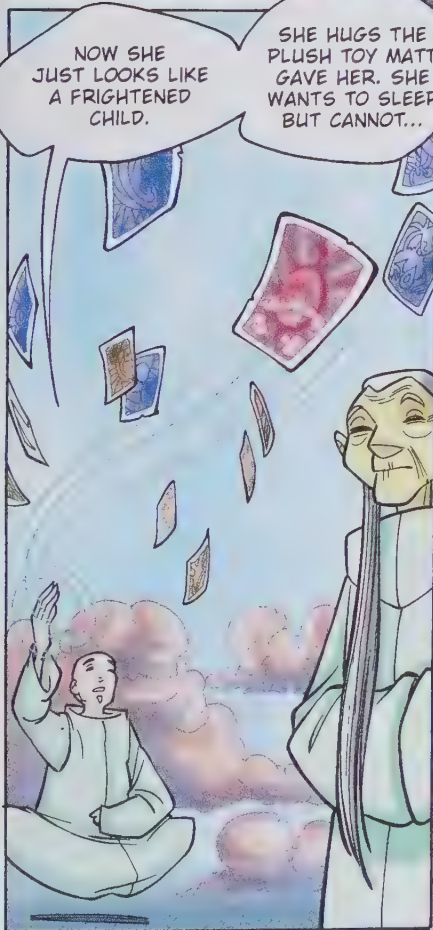
THE SILENCE OF DREAMS
SPEAKS TO WILL'S HEART...



WILL VANDOM,
THE CUSTODIAN OF
THE HEART OF
KANDRAKAR.

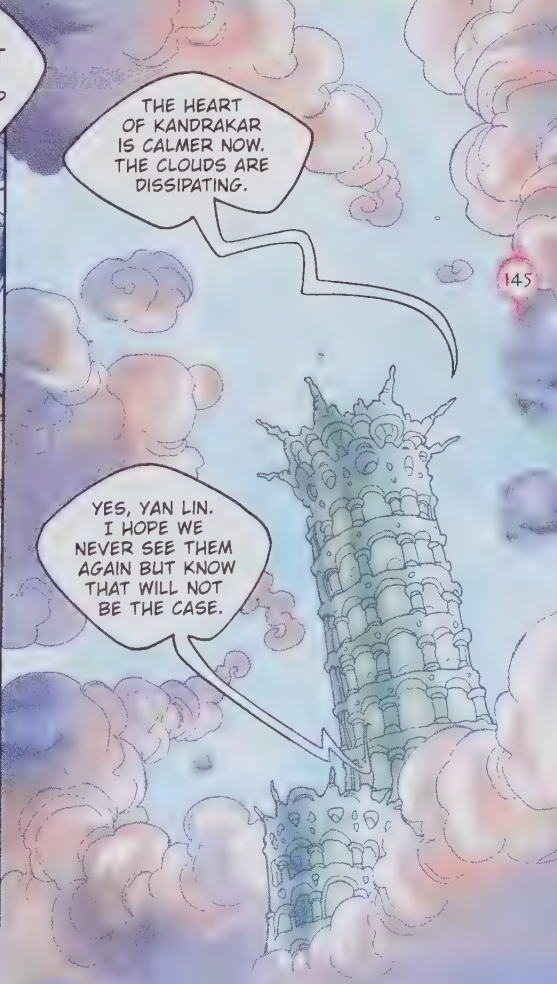


ONE OF THE MOST
FEARED CREATURES IN
THIS AND MANY OTHER
UNIVERSES...



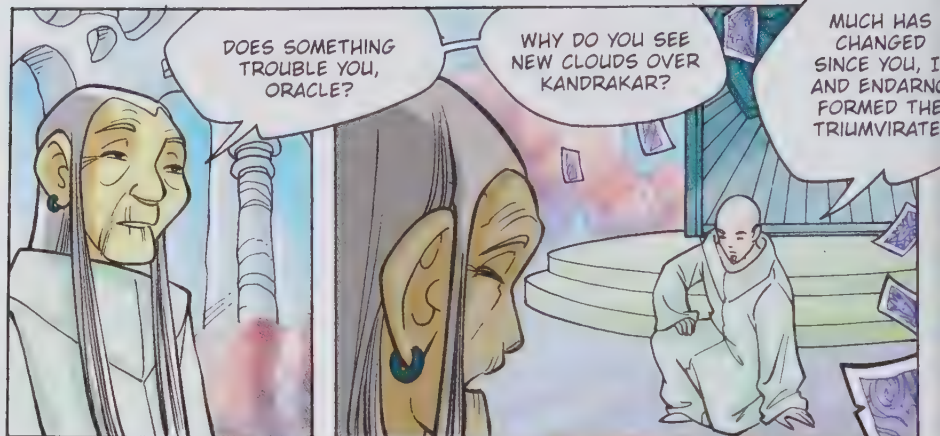
NOW SHE
JUST LOOKS LIKE
A FRIGHTENED
CHILD.

SHE HUGS THE
PLUSH TOY MATT
GAVE HER. SHE
WANTS TO SLEEP
BUT CANNOT...



THE HEART
OF KANDRAKAR
IS CALMER NOW.
THE CLOUDS ARE
DISSIPATING.

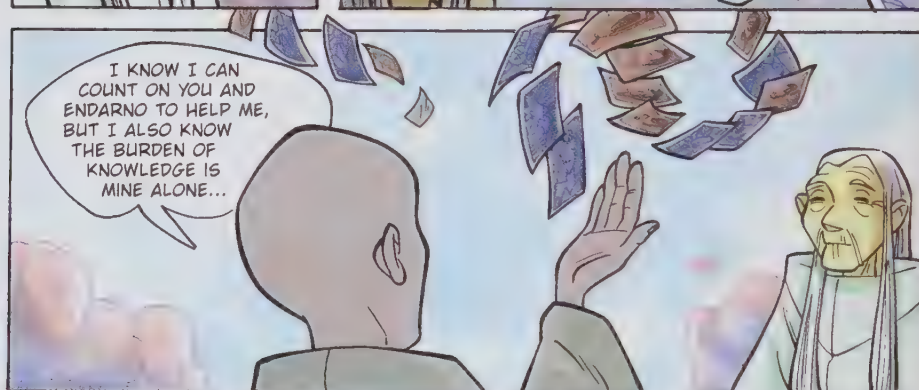
YES, YAN LIN.
I HOPE WE
NEVER SEE THEM
AGAIN BUT KNOW
THAT WILL NOT
BE THE CASE.



DOES SOMETHING
TROUBLE YOU,
ORACLE?

WHY DO YOU SEE
NEW CLOUDS OVER
KANDRAKAR?

MUCH HAS
CHANGED
SINCE YOU, I,
AND ENDARNO
FORMED THE
TRIUMVIRATE.



I KNOW I CAN
COUNT ON YOU AND
ENDARNO TO HELP ME,
BUT I ALSO KNOW
THE BURDEN OF
KNOWLEDGE IS
MINE ALONE...

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AND NOW I KNOW THAT, FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN KANDRAKAR'S
HISTORY, THE TRANSMUTING
CARDS ARE SUMMONING THE
GUARDIANS TO A DIFFICULT
CHALLENGE.



THEIR BIGGEST ONE YET.
ONE THAT WILL SEE
THEM DEAL WITH THEIR
POWERS, ALONE.



THAT'S WHY YOU
COULDN'T TELL THEM
ABOUT THE EVENTS THAT
LED TO THE BOOK'S
AWAKENING.

MORE OR
LESS.

MY ROLE DEMANDS I
WATCH OVER EVENTS
BUT MUST NOT
INTERVENE.

IT'S AS IF THE
ELEMENTS DELIBERATELY
HID MANY THINGS ABOUT
THIS MISSION FROM
US—BUT WHY?

BECAUSE A NEW ERA
IS ABOUT TO BEGIN,
AND THESE GUARDIANS
MUST PROVE THEY ARE
THE CHOSEN ONES.

POOR WILL.
WHAT FATE
AWAITS HER?

I WILL BE OUR
BRIDGE WITH THE
ELEMENTS...

...WHILE YOU,
WISE YAN LIN,
AMONG OTHER
THINGS...

...WILL
CONTROL THE
SPHERE OF
DREAMS.

THANK
YOU FOR
TRUSTING
ME.

I KNOW
YOU WILL DO
YOUR BEST.

I SHOULDN'T
INTERFERE, BUT
I CAN'T...

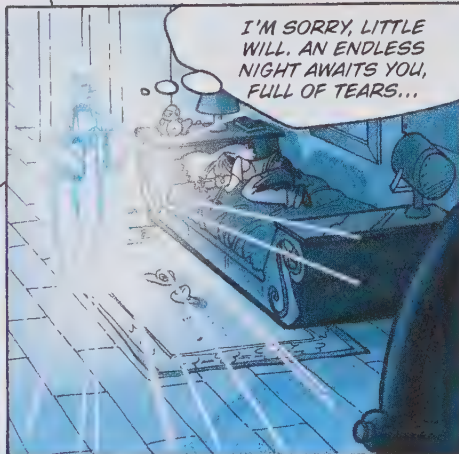
...SIT HERE AND DO
-NOTHING. MY GRAND-
DAUGHTER, HAY LIN,
IS A GUARDIAN.

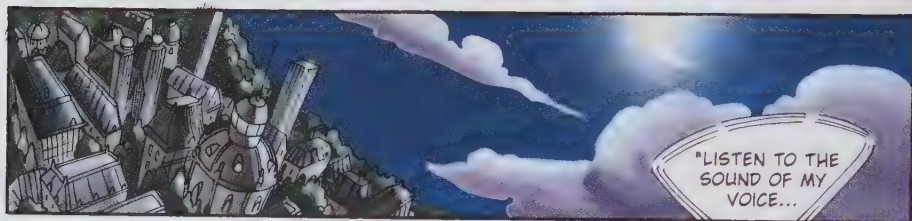
I'M HERE, WILL.
YOU CAN'T SEE OR
HEAR ME, BUT MAYBE YOU
CAN SENSE MY PRESENCE.
LIKE A WARM BREEZE...

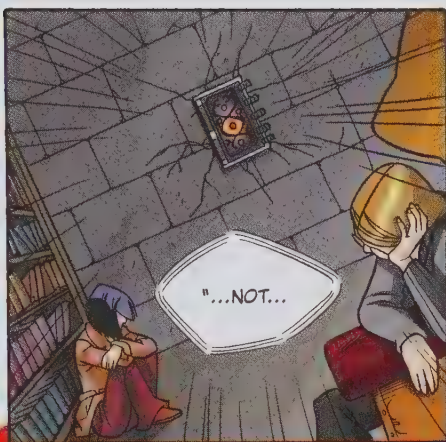
I SENSE YOU'RE
THINKING ABOUT ME.
TOMORROW YOU'LL WAKE
UP EARLY AND COME TO
KANDRAKAR FOR AN
EXPLANATION.

I WISH I COULD
HELP YOU, BUT I'M
NOT ALLOWED TO.

TONIGHT,
ALL I CAN DO IS
TRY TO GIVE YOU
SOME PEACE.





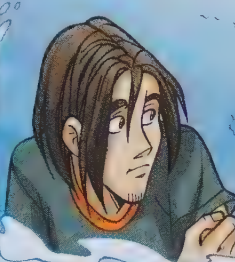




...WHERE
AM I?

THIS ISN'T
A REAL PLACE. IT
HAS NO HORIZON, NO
WALLS, NOTHING...

BUT IT'S NOT
NOTHING, BECAUSE
I CAN TOUCH IT, SEE
IT, BREATHE IT.

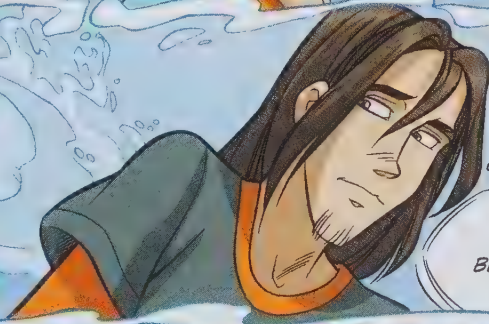


IT'S NEITHER
HOT NOR COLD,
BUT IT'S BLINDING
LIKE SNOW. I LEAVE
FOOTPRINTS, LIKE
ON SAND...

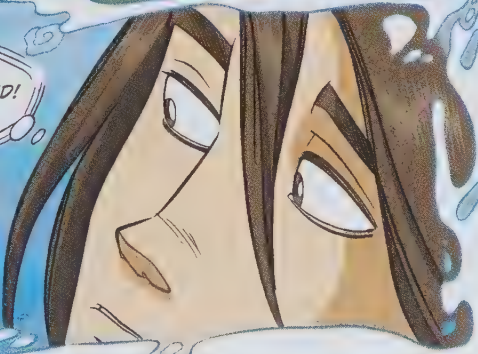
...BUT
THEY DISAPPEAR
IMMEDIATELY.



AND
SOMETIMES,
I GET THAT
HORRIBLE
FEELING...



...OF
BEING...



...WATCHED!

WHO IS IT?
WHO'S WATCHING
ME? IS ANYONE
HERE?



N-NOTHING.
NOT EVEN
AN ECHO.



I GOTTA
KEEP CALM.
CALM! BY NOW
I OUGHTA KNOW
SCREAMING IS
USELESS.



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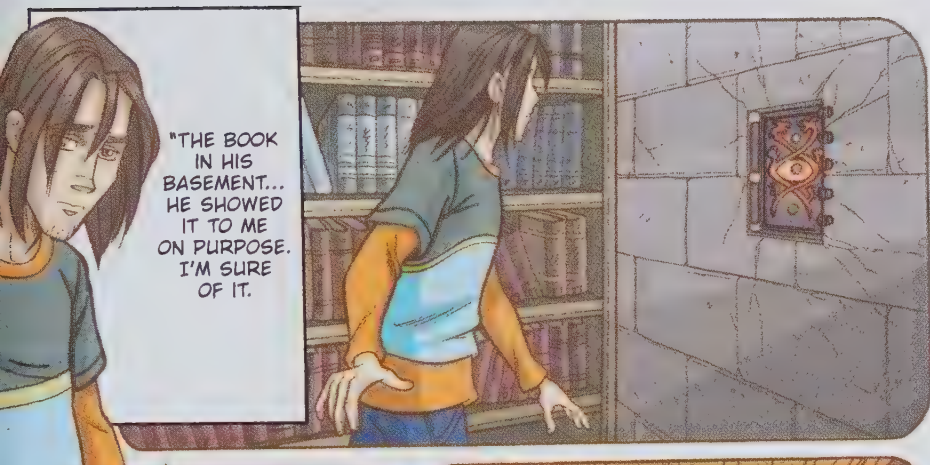
I'D BETTER
THINK FOR A WHILE.
TRY AND UNDER-
STAND...AND NOT
LOSE MY MIND!



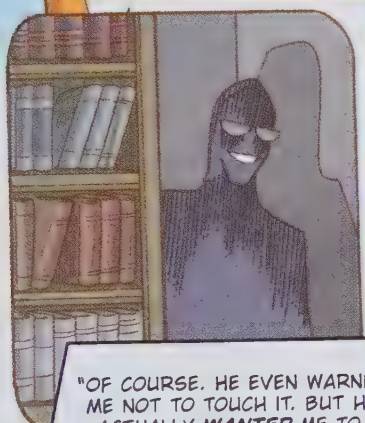
AT LEAST IN THIS
PLACE, I DON'T FEEL
HUNGRY OR THIRSTY.
EVERYTHING SEEMS...
SUSPENDED.

CEDRIC!
IT WAS HIM.
THAT SLEAZEBALL
TRICKED ME!

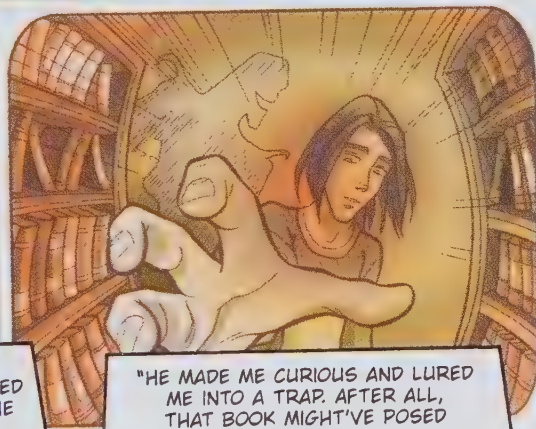




"THE BOOK
IN HIS
BASEMENT...
HE SHOWED
IT TO ME
ON PURPOSE.
I'M SURE
OF IT."



"OF COURSE. HE EVEN WARNED
ME NOT TO TOUCH IT. BUT HE
ACTUALLY **WANTED** ME TO."



"HE MADE ME CURIOUS AND LURED
ME INTO A TRAP. AFTER ALL,
THAT BOOK MIGHT'VE POSED
A THREAT TO WILL..."

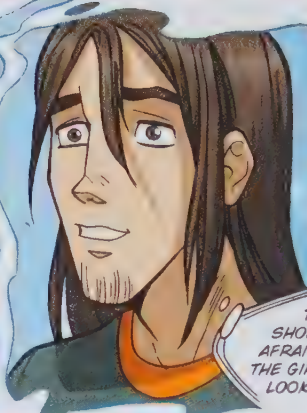


"...AND
TO ME!"

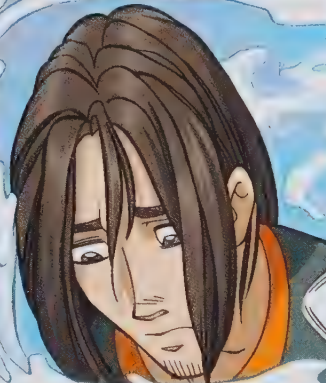




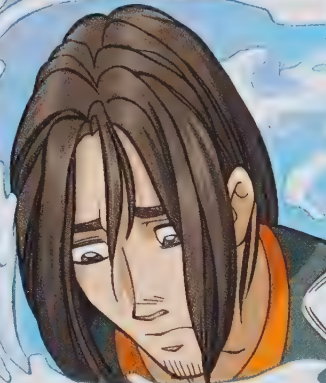
SO IT'S ALL TRUE.
THIS STRANGE WORLD...
REALLY
EXISTS.



THEN I
SHOULDN'T BE
AFRAID. WILL AND
THE GIRLS WILL COME
LOOKING FOR ME.



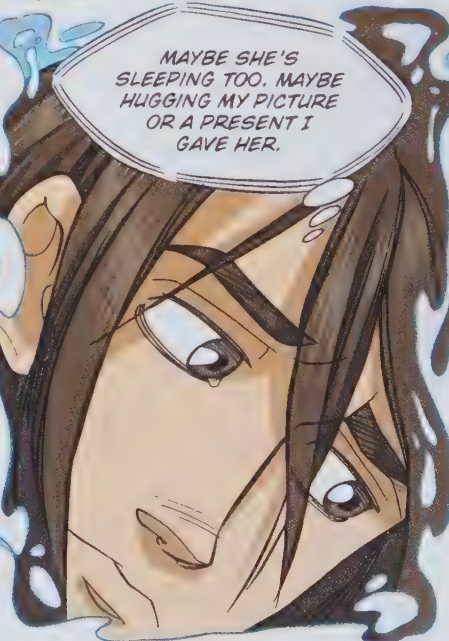
BUT WHEN WILL
THEY NOTICE I'M GONE? HOW
LONG HAS IT BEEN? AN ETERNITY
OR JUST A MOMENT?



TIME
DOESN'T EXIST
HERE EITHER...BUT
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I CAN'T GIVE UP
HOPE.



GOTTA SAVE MY
STRENGTH. GOTTA SLOW
MY THOUGHTS. SLEEP...
DREAM.



MAYBE SHE'S
SLEEPING TOO. MAYBE
HUGGING MY PICTURE
OR A PRESENT I
GAVE HER.



I'LL TRY TO REST.
MAYBE THIS WAY WE'LL
DREAM ABOUT EACH
OTHER.

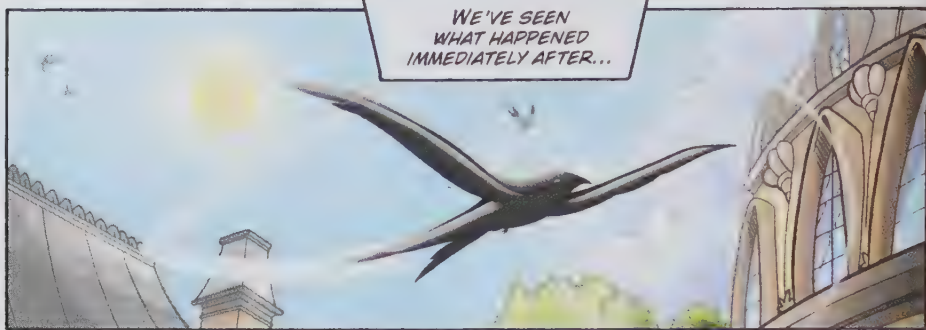


YES, WILL.
CLOSE YOUR EYES
TOO, AND IF YOU CAN
HEAR ME, KNOW
THAT...

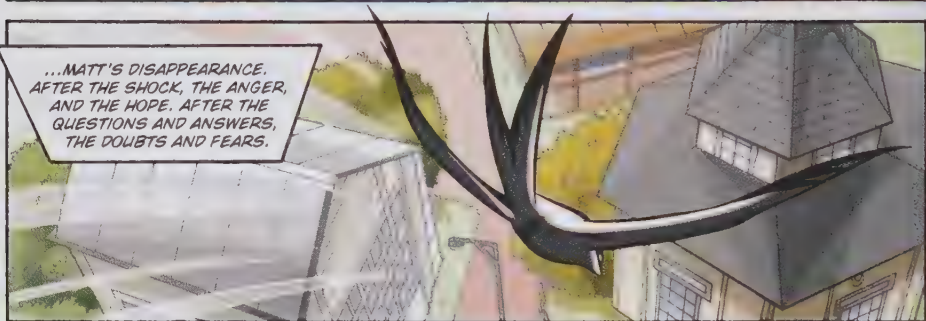


"...I'M WAITING
FOR YOU!"

WE'VE SEEN
WHAT HAPPENED
IMMEDIATELY AFTER...



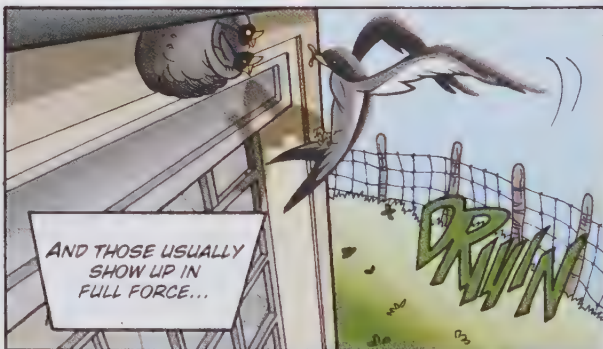
...MATT'S DISAPPEARANCE,
AFTER THE SHOCK, THE ANGER,
AND THE HOPE. AFTER THE
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS,
THE DOUBTS AND FEARS.



THE THING IS, WHEN FACTS
ARE CLEAR AND OPINIONS
ARE OUT IN THE OPEN...
THAT'S WHEN THE
CRACKS APPEAR.



AND THOSE USUALLY
SHOW UP IN
FULL FORCE...



...THE NEXT
DAY!





HEY, SIS,
STILL WITH US?

ALMOST.
≡ COUGH ≡
WHY'RE YOU
LOOKING FOR
MATT?

I GOTTA
TALK TO HIM.
PERSONAL STUFF,
BUT FAIRLY
URGENT. I CAN'T
SEEM TO FIND
HIM, THOUGH.

HIS MOM'S
AWAY FOR WORK
FOR A WEEK, AND
HE'S ALONE.

SO? HE'S
A GROWN-UP,
ISN'T HE?

THE THING IS, WE
SHOULD'VE MET UP
YESTERDAY, BUT HE
DIDN'T SHOW.

UM...
I'M SURE
HE HAD HIS
REASONS.

ME AND MY BIG
MOUTH. I COULD'VE
MADE SOMETHING UP
TO JUSTIFY MATT'S
ABSENCE...

...BUT NOW PETER'S
GOING TO KEEP
INVESTIGATING!

LATER,
AT CEDRIC'S
BOOKSHOP...

TRUST ME.
IF WE DON'T DO
SOMETHING, THE
SITUATION WILL
SPIRAL OUT OF
CONTROL.

C'MON, TARA.
YOU JUST SAID HIS
MOM WILL BE GONE
FOR A WEEK.

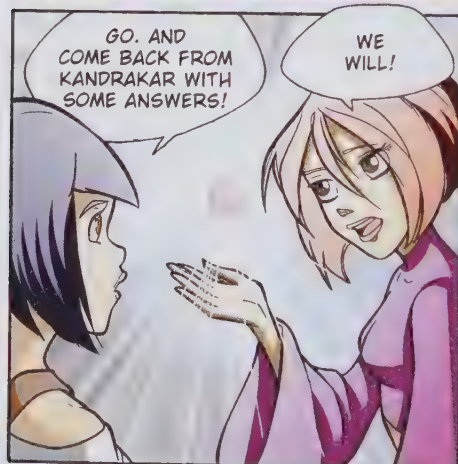
SHE'S NOT THE
ONLY PERSON
IN MATT'S LIFE!
HE HAS FRIENDS,
RELATIVES...

ALL THE MORE
REASON TO FREE HIM AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE.
READY, GUYS?

WATER...
AIR...

...EARTH...
FIRE...

...AND
WILL!



I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT ADVICE, BUT YOU SHOULD'VE SLEPT LAST NIGHT.

YOU SLEPT LIKE A LOG.

NOTHING HAPPENED, SO IT WAS POINTLESS STAYING AWAKE.

MMM.

THE EYE...

DURING THE NIGHT, I HAD TIME TO LOOK AT IT CLOSELY, AND YOU KNOW WHAT?

AT TIMES, I GOT THE UNPLEASANT FEELING IT WAS WATCHING ME BACK.

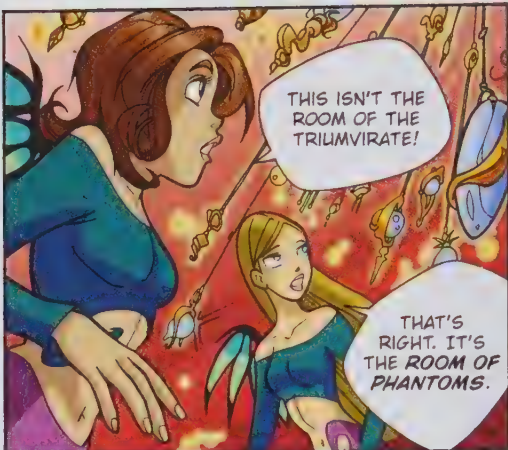
THE SAME FEELING I HAD A MOMENT AGO, WHEN THE GIRLS TRANSFORMED...

"...AND SET OFF TO
THE FORTRESS!"



THIS ISN'T THE
ROOM OF THE
TRIUMVIRATE!

THAT'S
RIGHT. IT'S
THE ROOM OF
PHANTOMS.



HERE, THEY PRESERVE
THE IMMATERIAL
COPIES OF ALL
THE MAGICAL
OBJECTS IN
KANDRAKAR.

WE KEEP
ENDING UP
HERE!



THAT'S TRUE,
CUSTODIAN OF
THE POWER OF
WATER, BUT AS
YOU'LL SOON
SEE, THERE'S
A REASON.



ENDARNO! WHERE
ARE YAN LIN AND
THE ORACLE?

THEY WON'T BE
ABLE TO ATTEND
THIS MEETING.





Something
FISHY'S
going on!

AS YOU KNOW,
THE FORTRESS IS
AT THE CENTER
OF INFINITY...

...AND
THIS CENTER
IS THE BALANCING
POINT OF MANY
UNIVERSES.

IN OTHER
WORDS, THERE'S
A LOT TO BE
DONE HERE.

PRECISELY.
YAN LIN AND THE ORACLE
ARE BUSY WITH OTHER
IMPORTANT TASKS.

BUT WE GOTTA
TALK TO THE
ORACLE!

HE'S VERY BUSY.
TODAY, YOU CAN
TALK TO ME.

HE'S TOO
BUSY?

ARE YOU
SERIOUS?

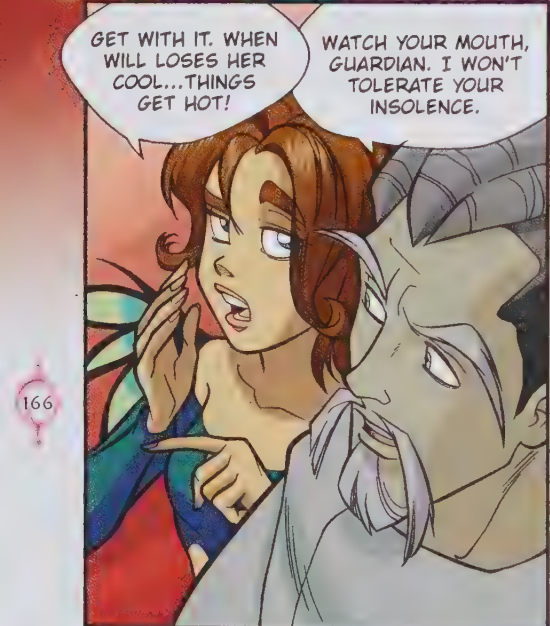
ABSOLUTELY.
EACH OF THE THREE
WISE ONES HAS THEIR
OWN DUTIES...

...AND IF NEED
BE, I CAN HANDLE
COMMUNICATION WITH
THE GUARDIANS.



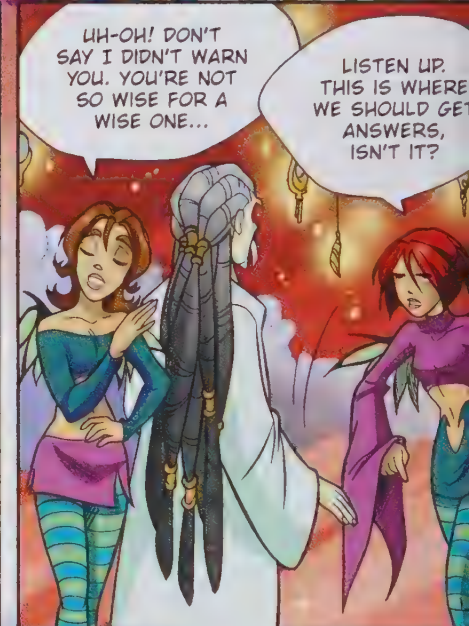
HONESTLY,
THIS IS GETTING
ON MY NERVES.
I WANT MATT
BACK!

E-EXCUSE
ME?



GET WITH IT. WHEN
WILL LOSER HER
COOL....THINGS
GET HOT!

WATCH YOUR MOUTH,
GUARDIAN. I WON'T
TOLERATE YOUR
INSOLENCE.



UH-OH! DON'T
SAY I DIDN'T WARN
YOU. YOU'RE NOT
SO WISE FOR A
WISE ONE...

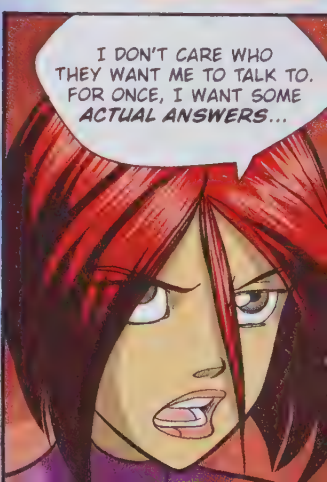
LISTEN UP.
THIS IS WHERE
WE SHOULD GET
ANSWERS,
ISN'T IT?



OF COURSE, BUT
THIS TIME, IT'S AT
THE BIDDING OF THE
PURE ESSENCE
OF THE
ELEMENTS!

WELL, I'VE
ALWAYS DONE
AS I WAS TOLD,
BUT I THINK THEY
SHOULD START
RESPECTING
ME TOO!

RUUUUMBLE



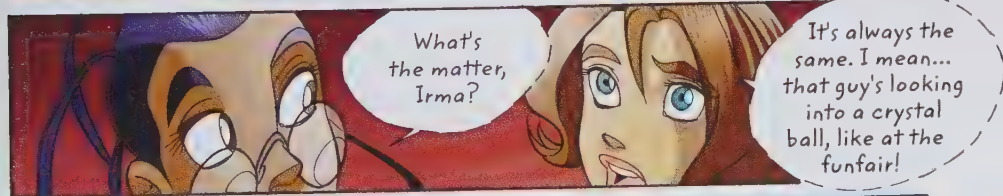
I DON'T CARE WHO
THEY WANT ME TO TALK TO.
FOR ONCE, I WANT SOME
ACTUAL ANSWERS...

"...WITHOUT
WEIRD RIDDLES
OR CARD TRICKS!"



Bah!

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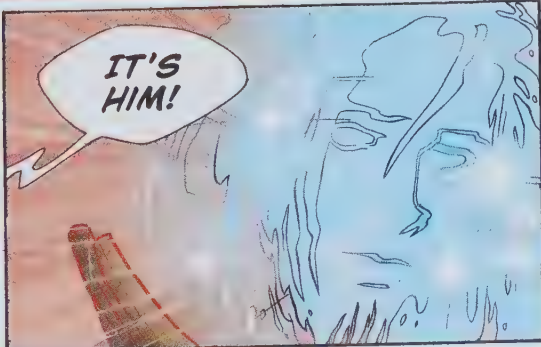
What's
the matter,
Irma?

It's always the
same. I mean...
that guy's looking
into a crystal
ball, like at the
funfair!



It seems that's the
only way to get
info about...

LOOK!



**IT'S
HIM!**



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WHAT
HAPPENED?

I D-DON'T KNOW!
I STILL HAVE TO
INTERPRET
THE SIGNS.

WHAT
YOU SEE IS
THE PHANTOM
OF THE **GLOBE**
OF **LAGADATH**,
AN ITEM AS OLD
AS **KANDRAKAR**
ITSELF.

WE ONLY HAVE THIS
IMMATERIAL COPY. THE
ORIGINAL HAS BEEN
LOST.

DID YOU
CHECK THE
ANTIQUE
SHOPS?

IRMA!

WHAT'D
I SAY?

ANYWAY, BECAUSE OF
ITS EPHEMERAL NATURE
THE **GLOBE** CAN ONLY
GIVE INCOMPLETE
OR INACCURATE
INFORMATION.



BUT WE JUST SAW MATT. NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT!

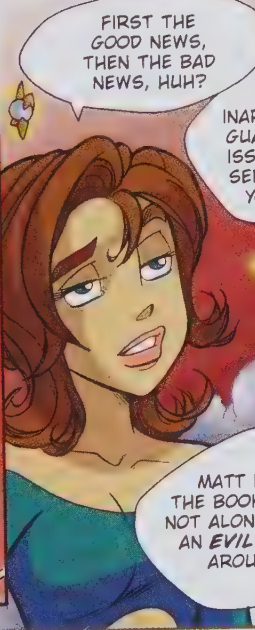
PRECISELY. HE'S ALIVE AND WELL. THAT'S THE ONLY CERTAINTY I CAN OFFER.



OH, WILL! THAT'S WONDERFUL NEWS!



THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM. SETTING HIM FREE WON'T BE EASY.



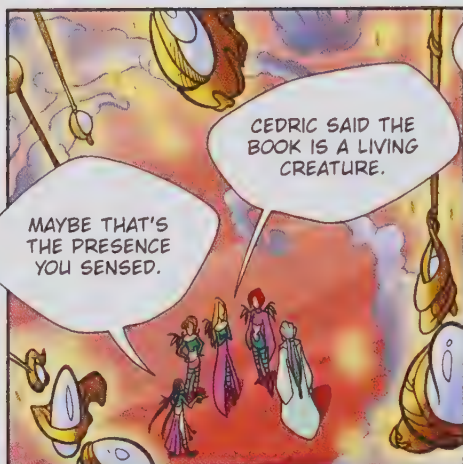
FIRST THE GOOD NEWS, THEN THE BAD NEWS, HUH?

YOUR IRONY IS INAPPROPRIATE, GUARDIAN. THE ISSUE IS MORE SERIOUS THAN YOU THINK.

MATT IS INSIDE THE BOOK, BUT HE'S NOT ALONE. I SENSED AN **EVIL** PRESENCE AROUND HIM.

"SOMETHING DARK THAT'S HIDING AND DIFFICULT TO DECIPHER."





MAYBE THAT'S
THE PRESENCE
YOU SENSED.

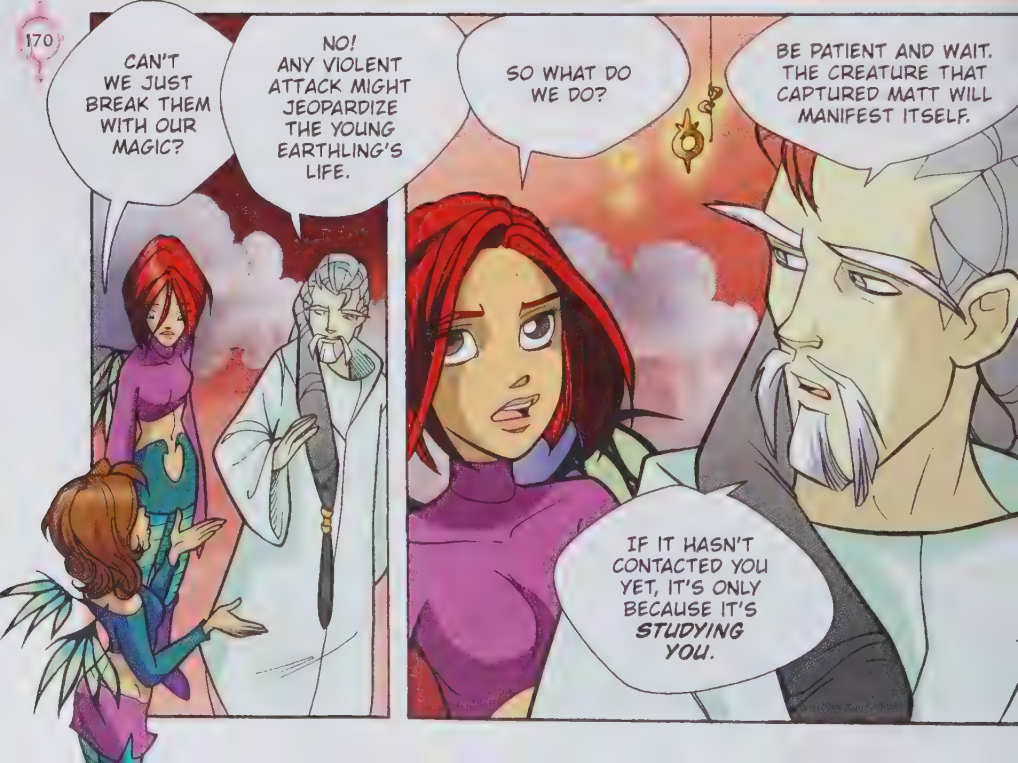
CEDRIC SAID THE
BOOK IS A LIVING
CREATURE.



YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND OUT.
THE FACT IS, THAT BOOK
IS SEALED BY FIVE
LOCKS.



IF YOU WANT TO
FREE YOUR FRIEND,
YOU'LL HAVE TO OPEN
THEM, ONE BY ONE.



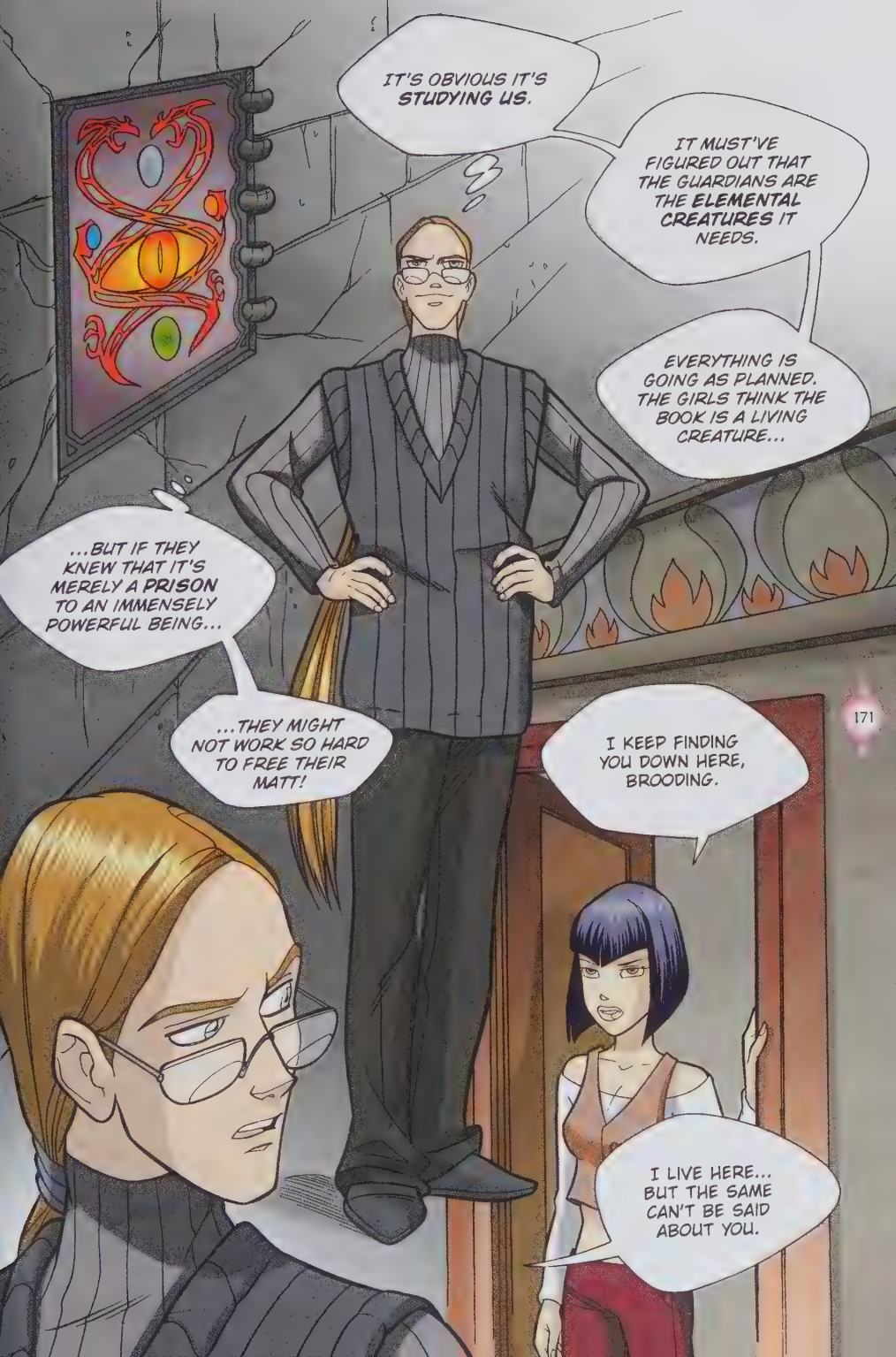
CAN'T
WE JUST
BREAK THEM
WITH OUR
MAGIC?

NO!
ANY VIOLENT
ATTACK MIGHT
JEOPARDIZE
THE YOUNG
EARTHLING'S
LIFE.

SO WHAT DO
WE DO?

BE PATIENT AND WAIT.
THE CREATURE THAT
CAPTURED MATT WILL
MANIFEST ITSELF.

IF IT HASN'T
CONTACTED YOU
YET, IT'S ONLY
BECAUSE IT'S
STUDYING
YOU.



IT'S OBVIOUS IT'S
STUDYING US.

IT MUST'VE
FIGURED OUT THAT
THE GUARDIANS ARE
THE ELEMENTAL
CREATURES IT
NEEDS.

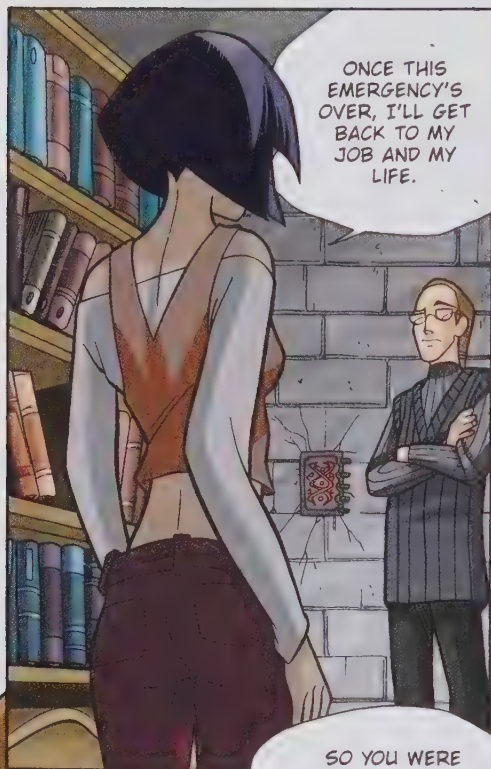
EVERYTHING IS
GOING AS PLANNED.
THE GIRLS THINK THE
BOOK IS A LIVING
CREATURE...

...BUT IF THEY
KNEW THAT IT'S
MERELY A PRISON
TO AN IMMENSELY
POWERFUL BEING...

...THEY MIGHT
NOT WORK SO HARD
TO FREE THEIR
MATT!

I KEEP FINDING
YOU DOWN HERE,
BROODING.

I LIVE HERE...
BUT THE SAME
CAN'T BE SAID
ABOUT YOU.

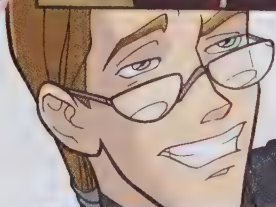


ONCE THIS
EMERGENCY'S
OVER, I'LL GET
BACK TO MY
JOB AND MY
LIFE.



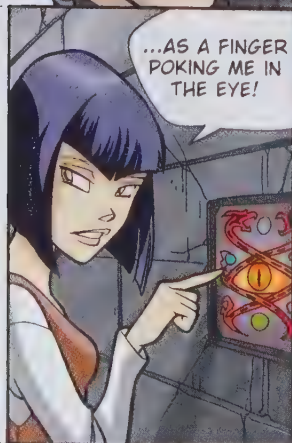
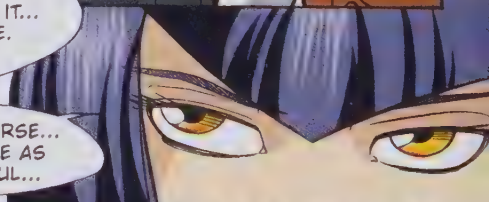
YOU REALLY
THINK
IT WILL
BE OVER
SOON?

I HOPE SO
FOR YOUR SAKE,
BECAUSE I'VE
NEVER SEEN
WILL THIS
ANGRY.



SO YOU WERE
SCARED. ADMIT IT...
YOU NEED ME.

OF COURSE...
YOU'RE AS
USEFUL...



...AS A FINGER
POKING ME IN
THE EYE!



FRUMP

?!
SWI!



RUMBLE

ANOTHER PLACE.
MORE THUNDER...

RUMBLE

I SENSE YOUR
TENSION, CUSTODIAN OF
THE HEART. WHAT'S
THE MATTER?

I WANNA KNOW WHY,
AFTER SHOWING
US MATT...

...THE GLOBE OF
LAGADATH SHOWED
US SOME WISPY
IMAGES.

YET
THEY WERE
SOMEHOW
FAMILIAR.

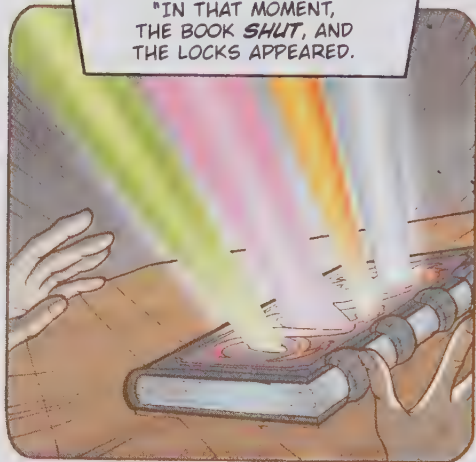
YES. THEY LOOKED
LIKE OUR SYMBOLS, AND
THERE WERE MONSTERS
BESIDE THEM.

THAT'S
THE KEY...THE
SYMBOLS!

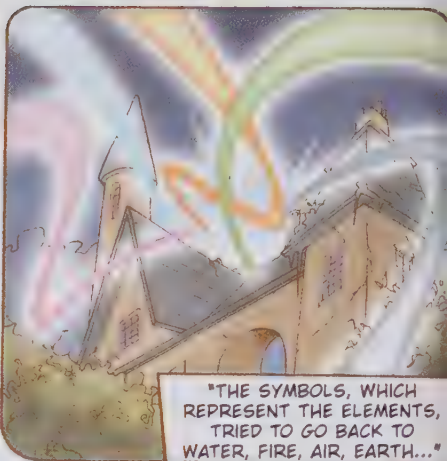
"EVERYTHING STARTED WHEN
LUDMOORE, EXPERIMENTING IN
HIS VILLA NEAR HEATHERFIELD..."

"...TRIED TO CONQUER
THE POWER OF THE
ELEMENTS, ESPECIALLY
THEIR DARK SIDE."

"IN THAT MOMENT,
THE BOOK *SHUT*, AND
THE LOCKS APPEARED.



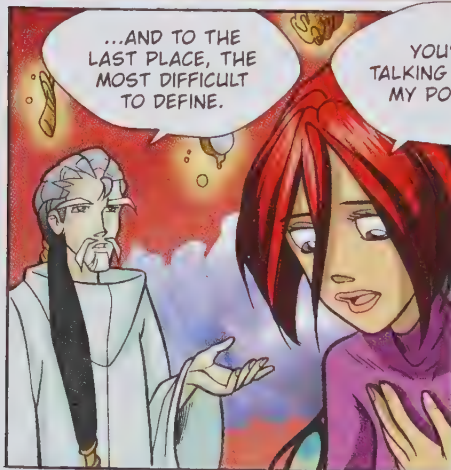
"THE SYMBOLS, WHICH
REPRESENT THE ELEMENTS,
TRIED TO GO BACK TO
WATER, FIRE, AIR, EARTH..."



...AND TO THE
LAST PLACE, THE
MOST DIFFICULT
TO DEFINE.

YOU'RE
TALKING ABOUT
MY POWER.

THAT'S RIGHT,
BUT IT'S NOT OVER.
THE SYMBOLS HID
THEMSELVES AND,
ALMOST
CERTAINLY...



...HAVE CHOSEN
THEIR *ETERNAL*
CUSTODIANS.



THE CUSTODIANS
ARE THE CREATURES
YOU SAW. MAGICAL
BEINGS...

...SUMMONED
BY THE SYMBOLS
TO PROTECT THEM.
TO OPEN THE LOCKS, YOU'LL
THEREFORE HAVE TO
FIGHT THOSE
CUSTODIANS...

WE'RE NOT
AFRAID OF
THEM.

FOR MATT,
I'D FIGHT
THE ELEMENTS
THEMSELVES.

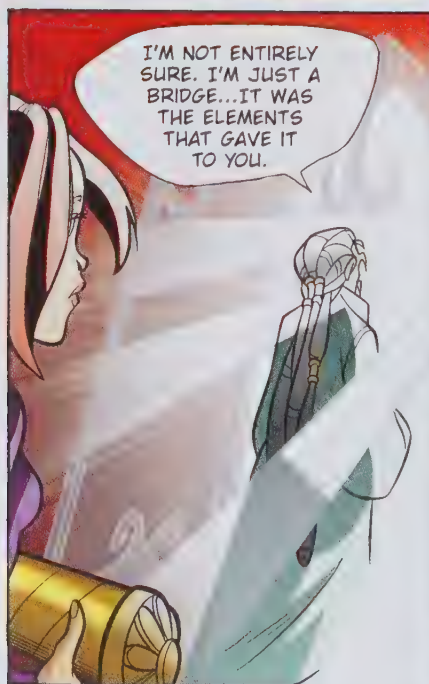
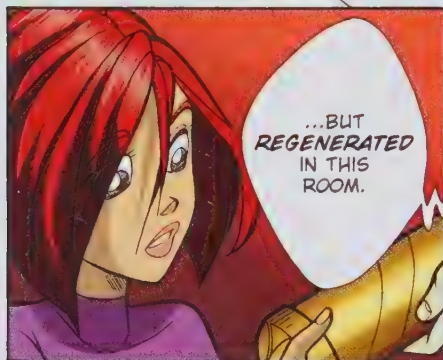
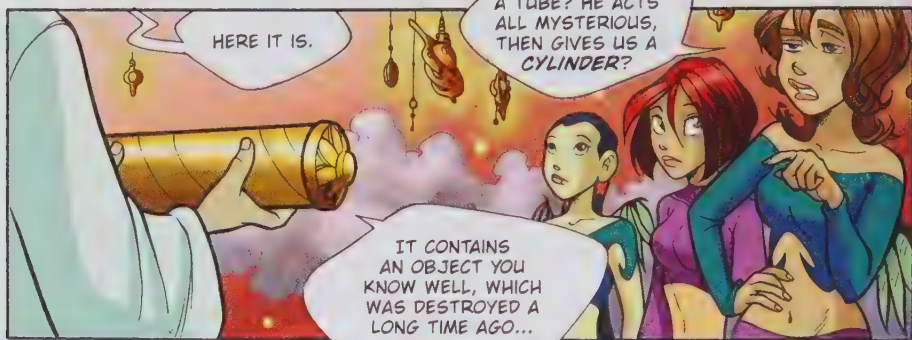
GOOD. BECAUSE
THAT'S WHAT YOU'LL
HAVE TO DO...

NOW THE REASON
YOU'VE BEEN
BROUGHT TO THIS
ROOM...

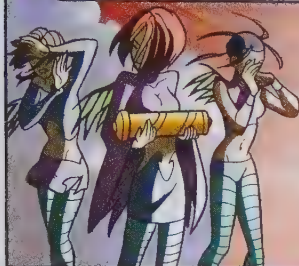
...BECOMES
CLEARER.

IT WASN'T
TO SEE THAT
CRYSTAL
BALL?

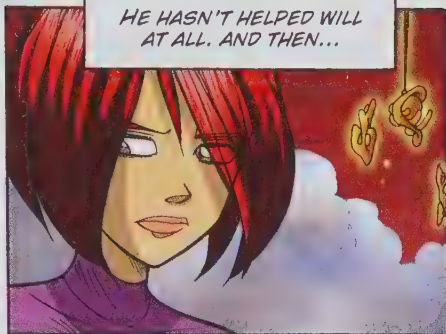
OH, NO. IF
YOU UNDERSTAND
WHY, IT'LL BE EASIER
TO GRASP THE
MEANING OF
MY GIFT.



ENDARNO DISAPPEARS,
LEAVING SO MANY
QUESTIONS UNANSWERED.



HE HASN'T HELPED WILL
AT ALL. AND THEN...



...SOMETHING
UNEXPECTED
HAPPENS!

HEART OF
KANDRAKAR,
TAKE US...



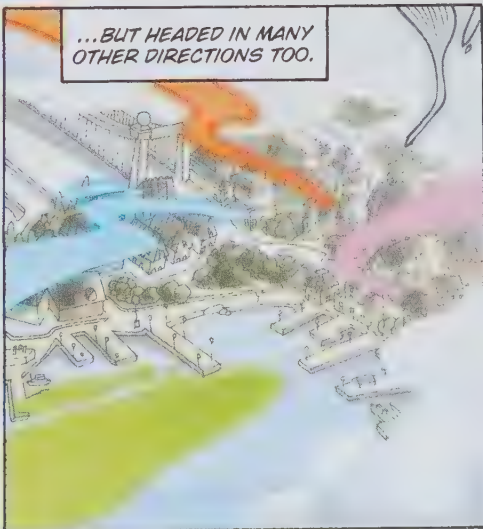
...HOME!

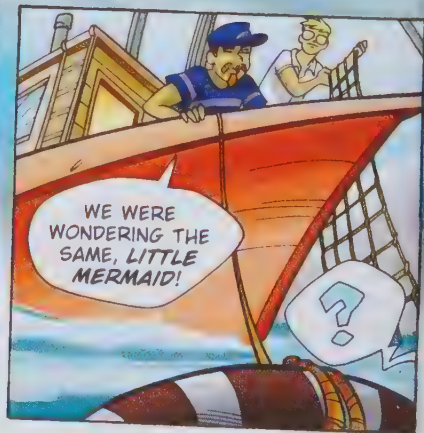
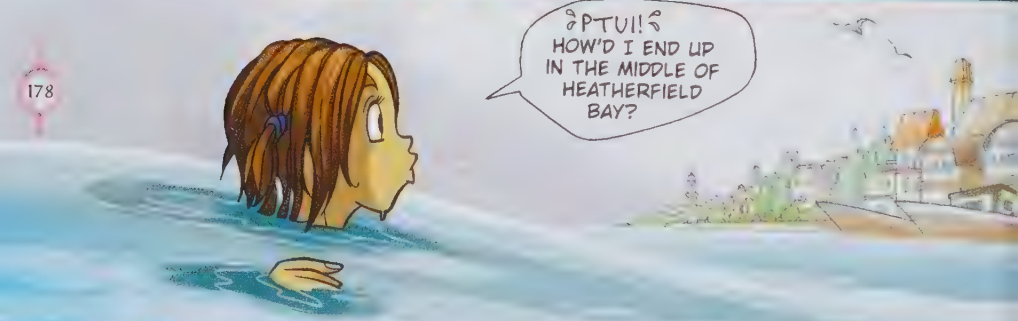
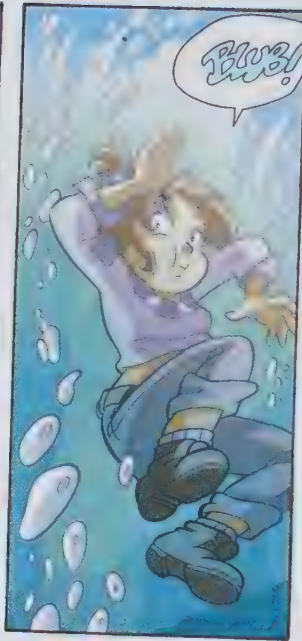


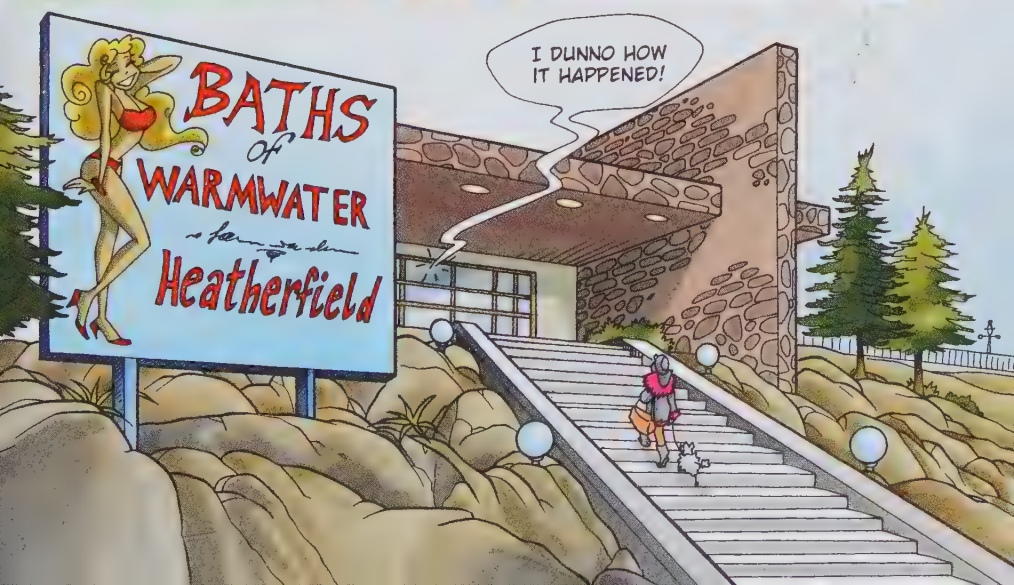
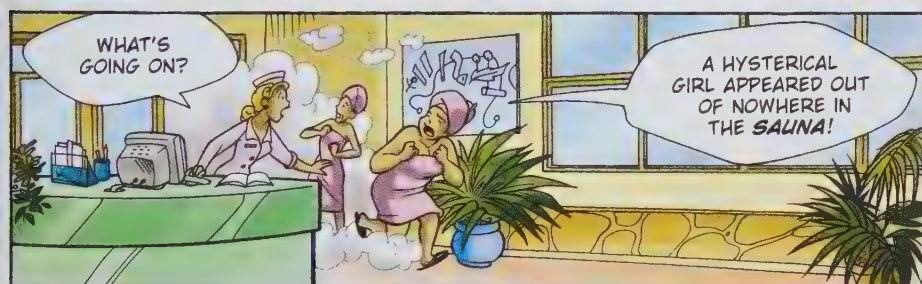
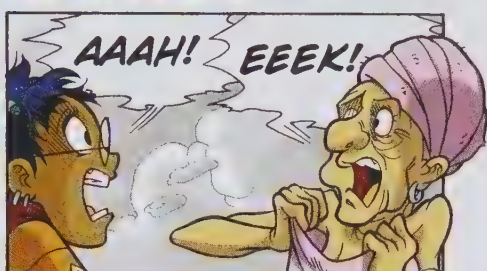
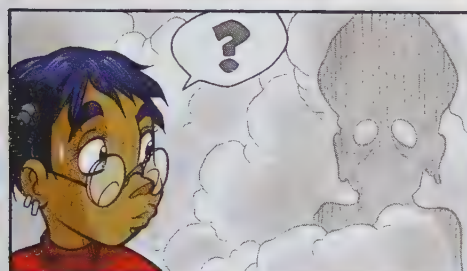
FIVE RAYS OF LIGHT LEAVE
THE FORTRESS, HEADED
FOR EARTH...

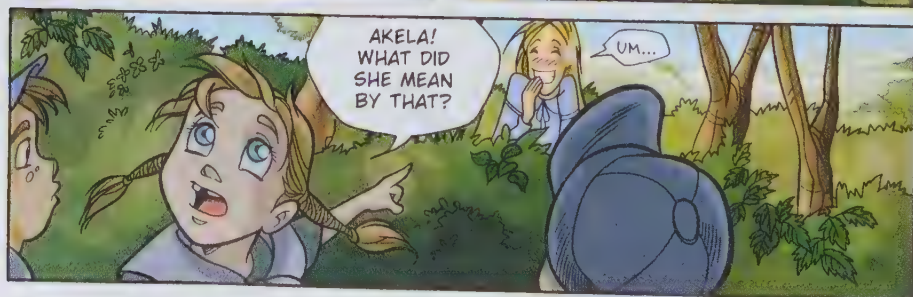
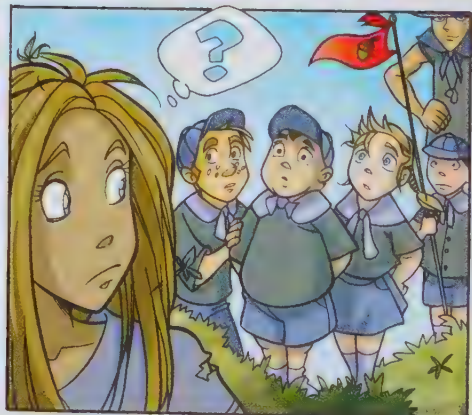
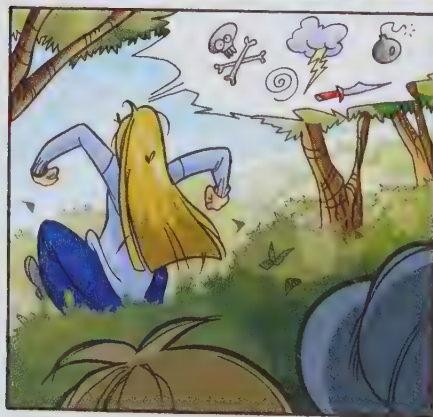
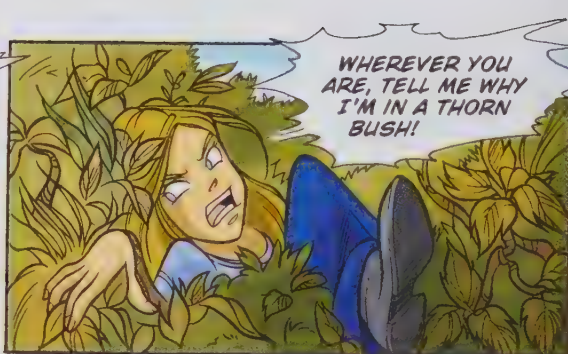
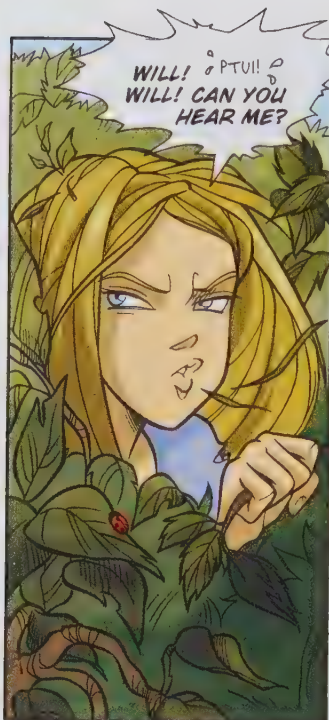


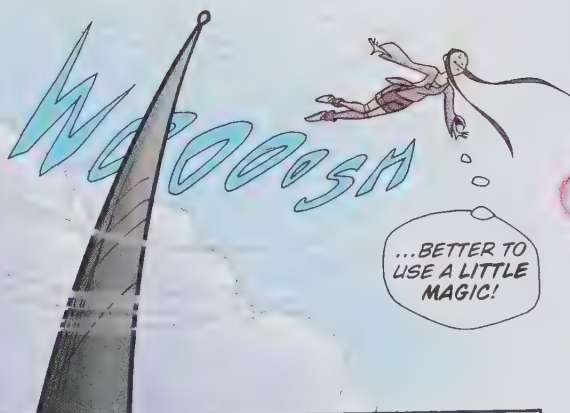
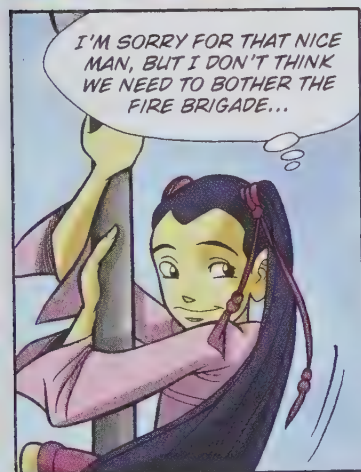
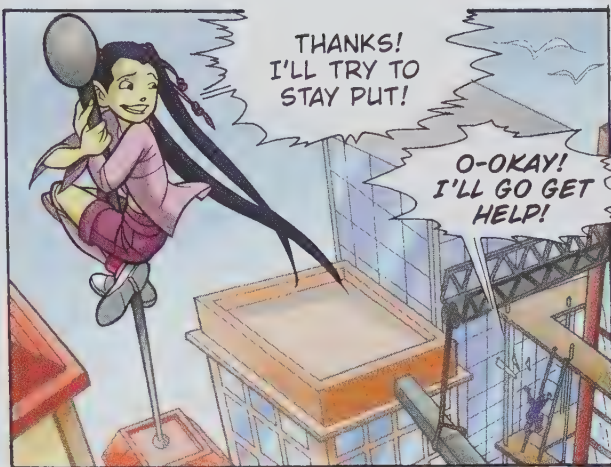
...BUT HEADED IN MANY
OTHER DIRECTIONS TOO.

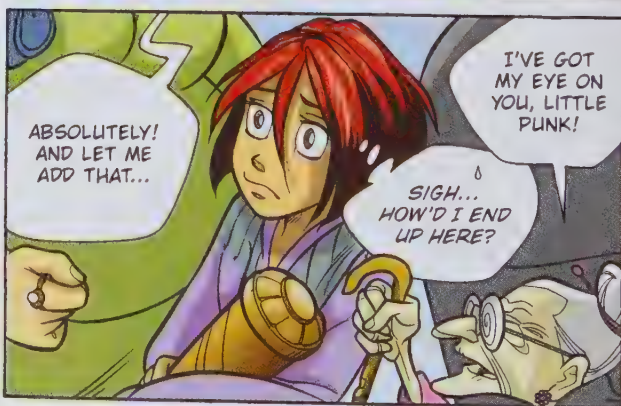
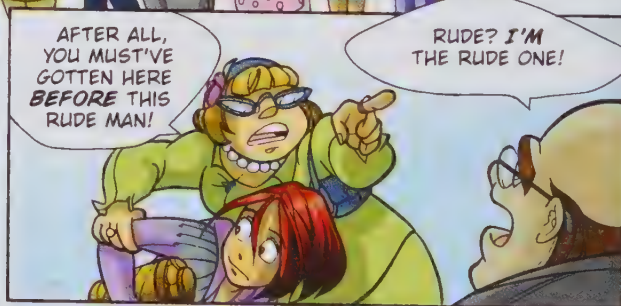
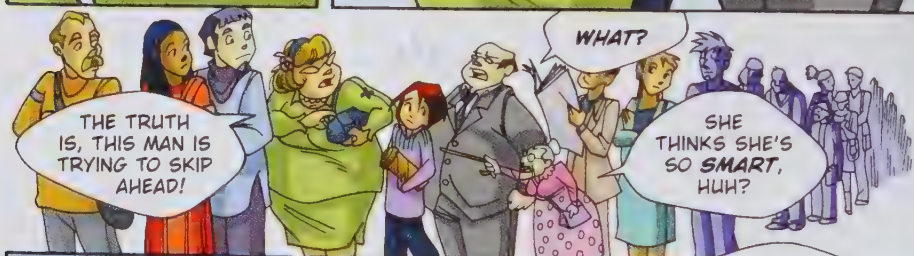
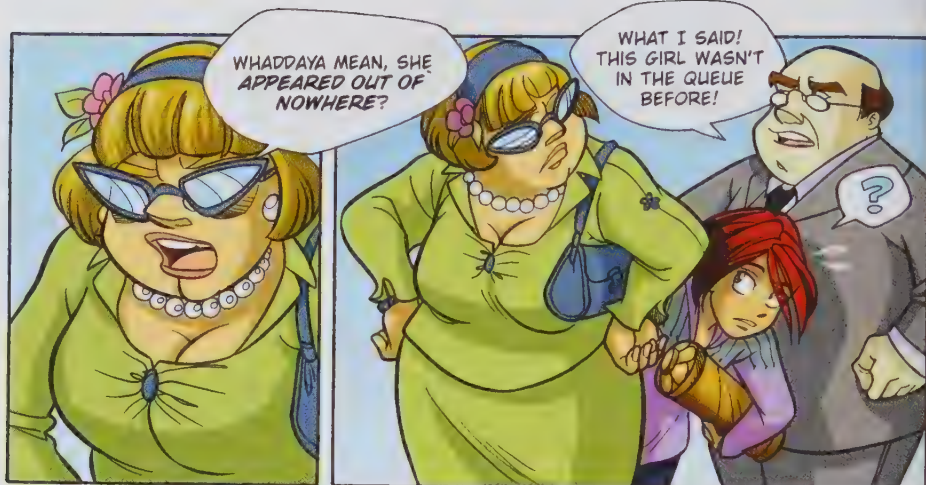












AT AFTERNOON, AT
RIC'S BOOKSHOP...

ON LINE AT
CITY HALL?
THAT'S
TERRIBLE!

IT WAS A NIGHTMARE...
AND WHEN I GOT TO THE
DESK, I HAD NO IDEA
WHAT TO SAY!

WELL,
WE'VE ALL
GOT A STORY
TO TELL...

AIN'T THAT
THE TRUTH!

IRMA!
WHAT'S
THAT
STINK?

A SOUVENIR FROM
THE *FISHING BOAT*
THAT BROUGHT
ME BACK TO
SHORE!

I HOPE WE'VE GOT
A WARRANT ON
TELEPORTATION.
I WANT MY MONEY
BACK!

COME ON!
WE ENDED UP IN FIVE
DIFFERENT PLACES
BUT STILL NEAR
HEATHERFIELD.

183

CEDRIC AND I
DIDN'T GO SO FAR,
BUT WE'VE STILL GOT
SOMETHING TO
SHARE...

"...BUT MORE
IMPORTANTLY,
TO SHOW YOU!"

A CRACK IN THE
WALL, RIGHT NEXT
TO THE BOOK.

THERE WAS A KIND OF
SMALL EARTHQUAKE, AND
THAT'S THE
RESULT...

GOOD!
LET'S TRY TO
PULL IT OUT.

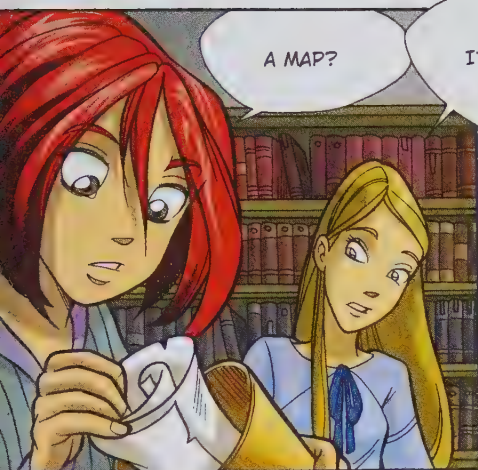
I DON'T THINK
THAT'S A GOOD
IDEA. THE EARTH
SHOOK AFTER I
TOUCHED IT.

SPEAKING OF
MYSTERIES, DO YOU
HAVE THE CYLINDER
ENDARNO GAVE
US?

YES.

SO? OPEN IT.
WHAT ARE YOU
WAITING FOR?

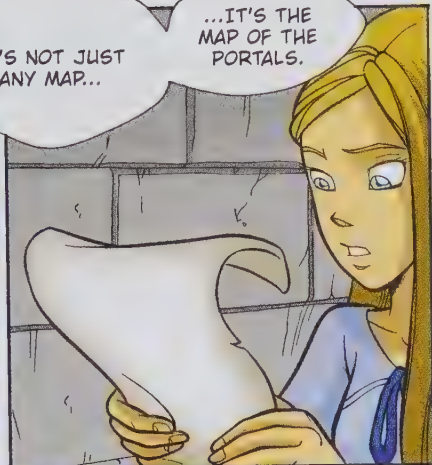
CLUNK



A MAP?

IT'S NOT JUST
ANY MAP...

...IT'S THE
MAP OF THE
PORTALS.



GO FIGURE.
AND HERE I WAS
HOPING FOR A NEW
MAGICAL TOY TO
DEFEAT THE BAD
GUYS!

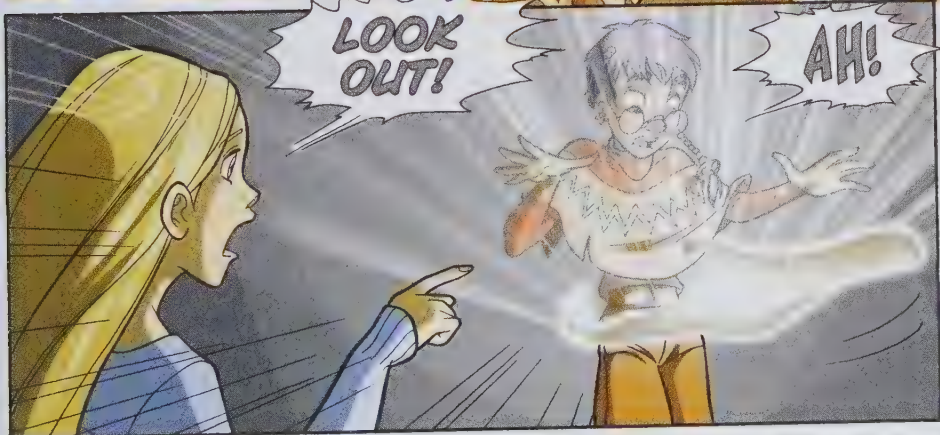
THIS MAP MARKS
THE PASSAGES
THAT USED TO EXIST
BETWEEN EARTH
AND METAMOOR...



...BUT NOW
THOSE PORTALS
ARE CLOSED.
WHAT GOOD IS
IT TO US?

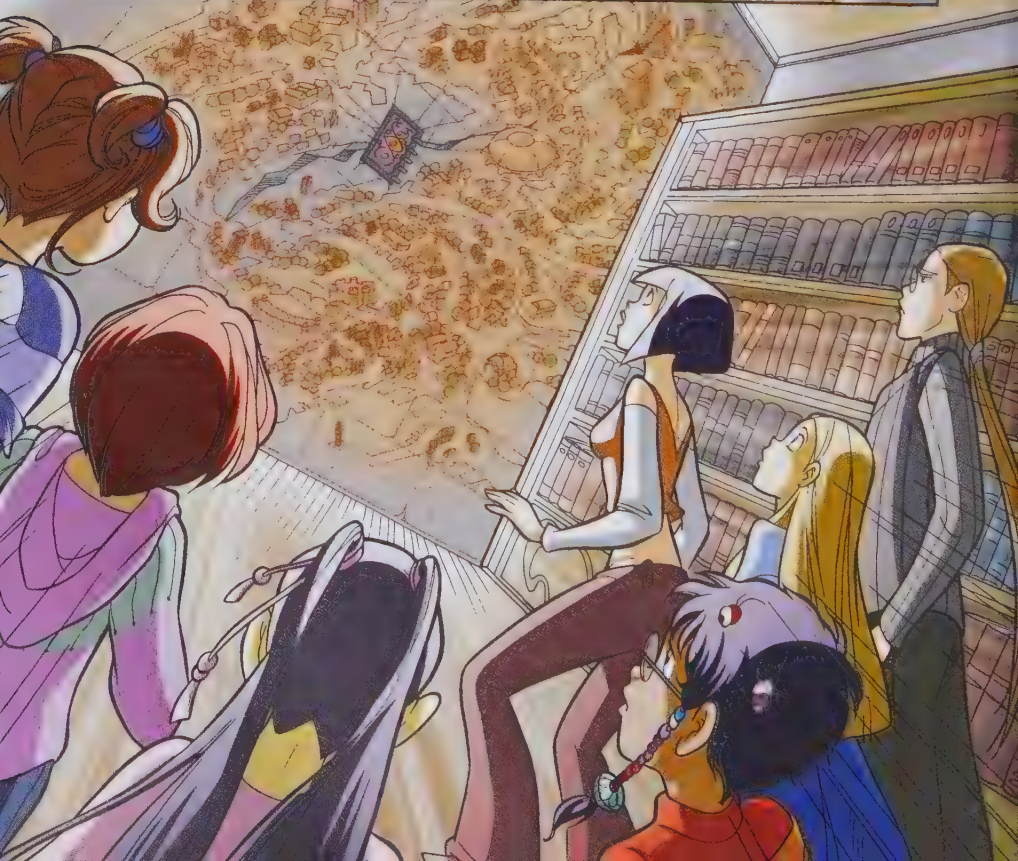
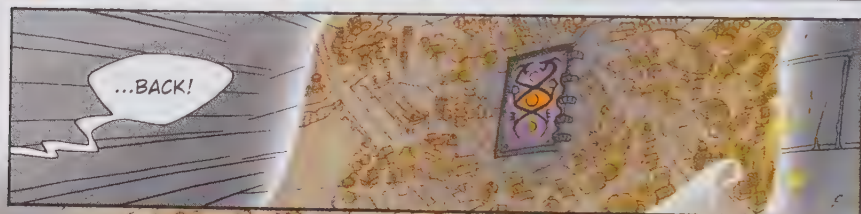


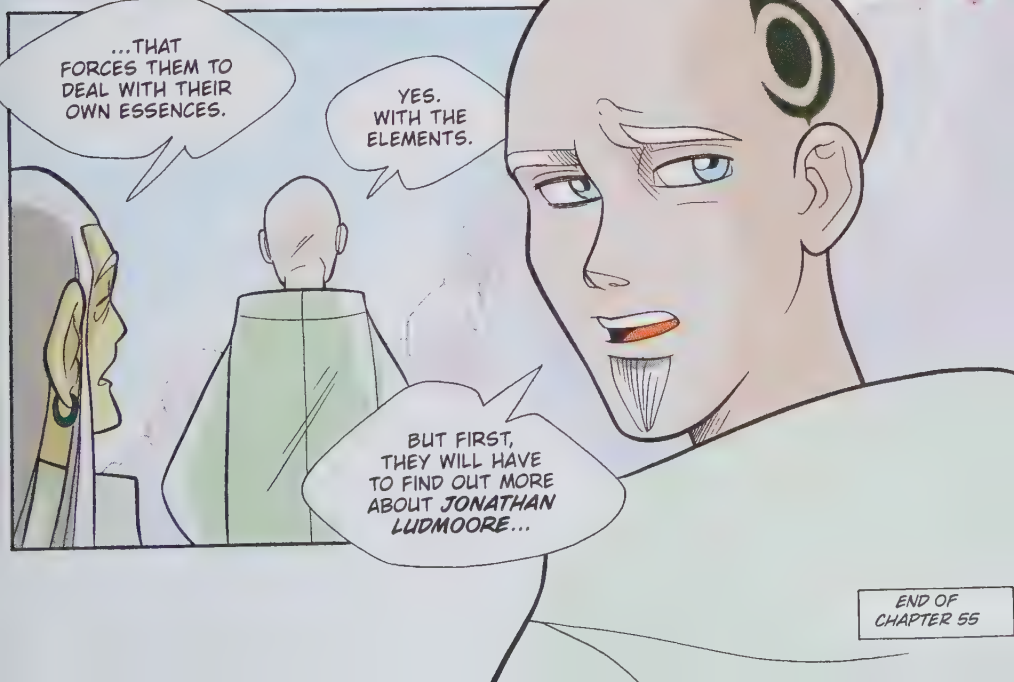
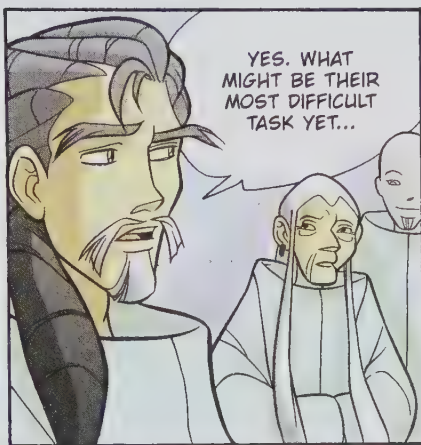
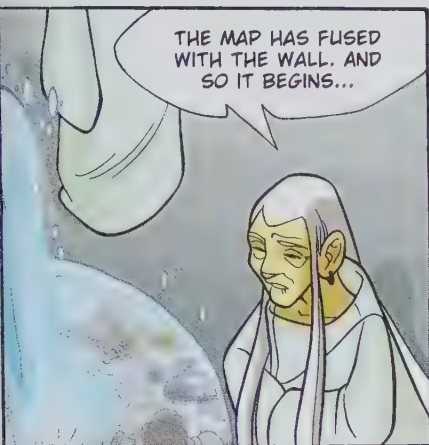
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LOOK
OUT!

AH!





Witch

Will Irma Terance Cornelia May Lin



The Riddle

"She looks so sweet and
helpless when she's asleep."



Witch

Will Irma Jarance Cornelia May Lin

TUMP
TUMP

WILL!

WIIILL!

FINALLY!
COME ON IN!

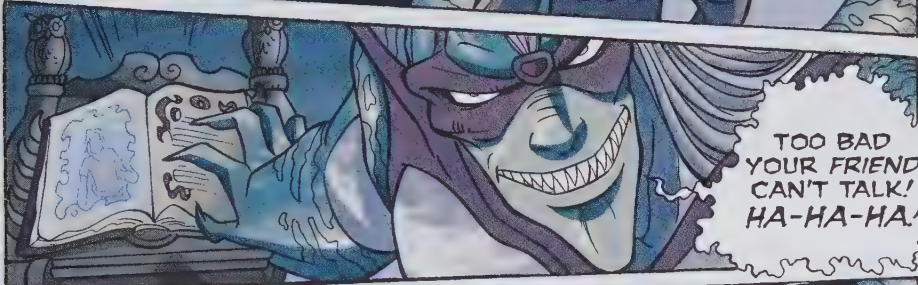
PRIVATE

GNNIIK

YOU!



WE WERE WAITING
FOR YOU, GUARDIAN.
YOU'VE COME TO
KEEP US COMPANY.



TOO BAD
YOUR FRIEND
CAN'T TALK!
HA-HA-HA!



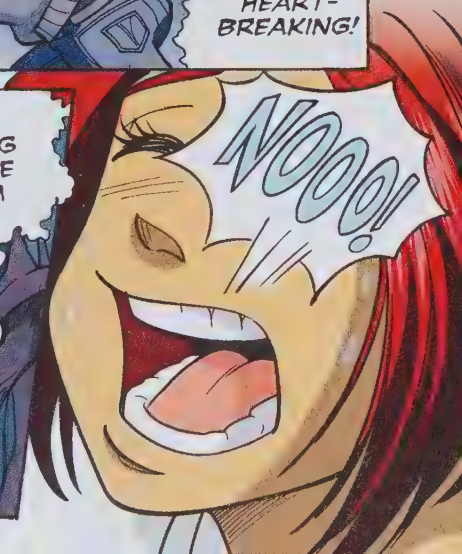
MATT!

HOW
HEART-
BREAKING!



SPAM

YOU CAN
STOP WORRYING
ABOUT HIM. I'VE
SQUASHED HIM
LIKE A FLY!



No!!!



IT SEEMED
SO REAL...MATT,
I GOTTA GET YOU
OUT OF THERE!

COME
ON OUT, WILL!
TIME TO GET UP.
THE SUN IS
SHINING!

THE LAST TIME WILL
SAW MATT, IT WAS
RAINING.

THE LAST TIME
HE HELD HER...

TOC
TOC

THE MEMORY OF
THAT LAST HUG
HURTS.

OKAY...LET'S PRETEND
IT'S ANY OLD DAY.
GOOD MORNING,
HONEY!

HOW CAN IT BE A
GOOD MORNING WHEN
MATT'S BEEN TAKEN
FROM HER?

YOU SHOULD
REPLY "GOOD
MORNING, MOM,"
AND I NEED TO
REMIND YOU ABOUT
SOMETHING.

HUH?
ABOUT
WHAT?

BEEEEP!
WRONG ANSWER!
BUT I UNDERSTAND.
WE'VE GOT A MILLION
THINGS TO DO AND
A BILLION TO
ORGANIZE...

TODAY, I HAVE
TO PICK THE
INVITATIONS FOR
THE WEDDING.
THERE ARE SO
MANY KINDS,
BUT I'D LIKE
SOMETHING
SIMPLE.

I WISH
GETTING
YOU OUT OF
THERE WAS
SIMPLE...

HEE-HEE! I FEEL
ALL JUMPY, LIKE
A LITTLE GIRL!

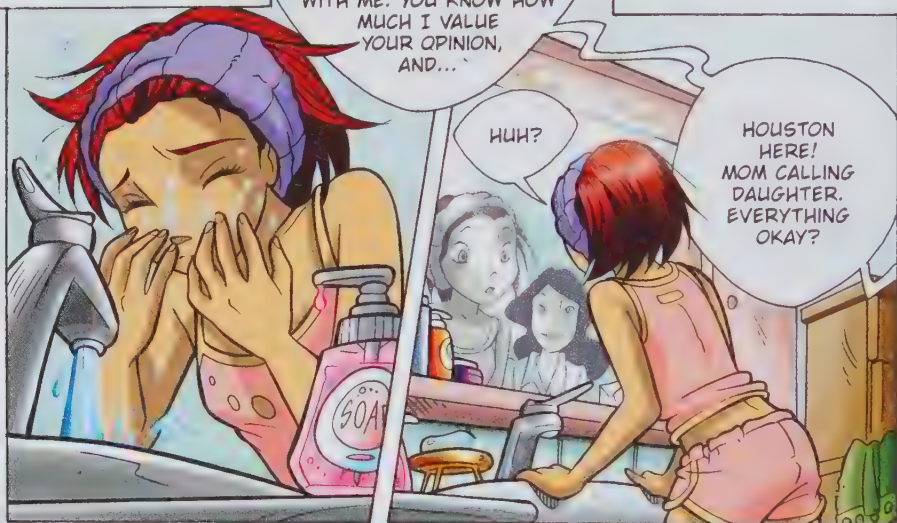
I'M SUCH A
STUPID GIRL!
HOW COULD I
UNDERESTIMATE
CEDRIC?
WHY WASN'T I
SUSPICIOUS?

UM...
YOU HAVEN'T
TOUCHED YOUR
BREAKFAST.
NOT HUNGRY?

WILL WISHES SHE
COULD WASH HER GUILT
AWAY, BUT NOBODY CAN
CHANGE THE PAST. ALL
SHE CAN DO IS WAIT.

AND TOMORROW,
WE'LL SEE ABOUT
THE DRESS...I'M SO
HAPPY YOU'RE COMING
WITH ME. YOU KNOW HOW
MUCH I VALUE
YOUR OPINION,
AND...

WAIT FOR THE
BOOK TO SPEAK, TO
MAKE ITS REQUEST.
ONLY THEN WILL SHE
KNOW WHAT TO DO.

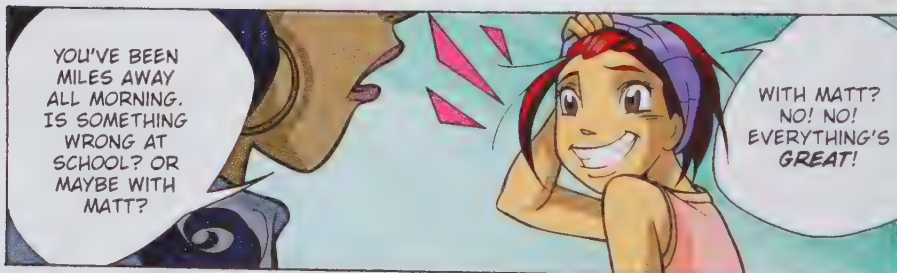


HUH?

HOUSTON
HERE!
MOM CALLING
DAUGHTER.
EVERYTHING
OKAY?

YOU'VE BEEN
MILES AWAY
ALL MORNING.
IS SOMETHING
WRONG AT
SCHOOL? OR
MAYBE WITH
MATT?

WITH MATT?
NO! NO!
EVERYTHING'S
GREAT!



I'M LATE.
I GOTTA
RUN!

BEFORE YOU
SEE THE FEAR
IN MY EYES,
MOM.

BEFORE
YOU CAN GUESS
HOW BAD I'M
FEELING!



UM...IS SHE
RUNNING AWAY FROM
ME? BUT SHE SEEMED
TO TAKE THE NEWS
SO WELL!

MAYBE SHE'S
STARTED THINKING
ABOUT WHAT LIFE WITH
DEAN ENTAILS AND HAS
CHANGED HER MIND
AND DOESN'T WANT
ME TO GET
MARRIED
AND...

OH,
MAYBE I'M JUST
PROJECTING MY
WORRIES ONTO
HER...

YOU'RE THE
CHICKEN HERE,
FUTURE MRS.
COLLINS!

HMM...
MRS. COLLINS?

I GUESS
I NEED TO
GET USED
TO IT!

SHEFFIELD
INSTITUTE...

RECESS IS
THE ONLY GOOD
THING ABOUT
SCHOOL.

DRUM

IT SHOULD LAST
LONGER...

HUH? IS THAT
FRENCHIE STILL
AROUND?

NOT THAT I
HAVE ANYTHING
AGAINST HER...
GUESS I
JUST HATE
FRENCH!

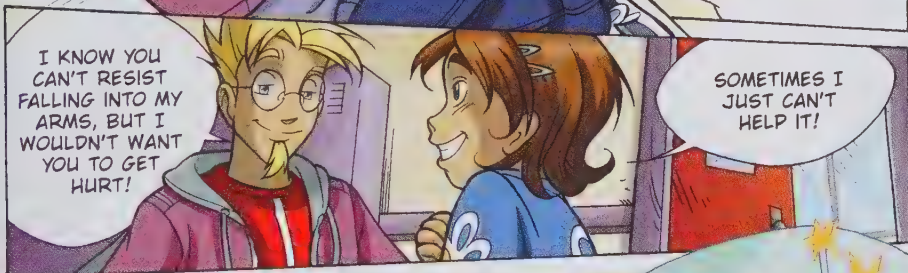
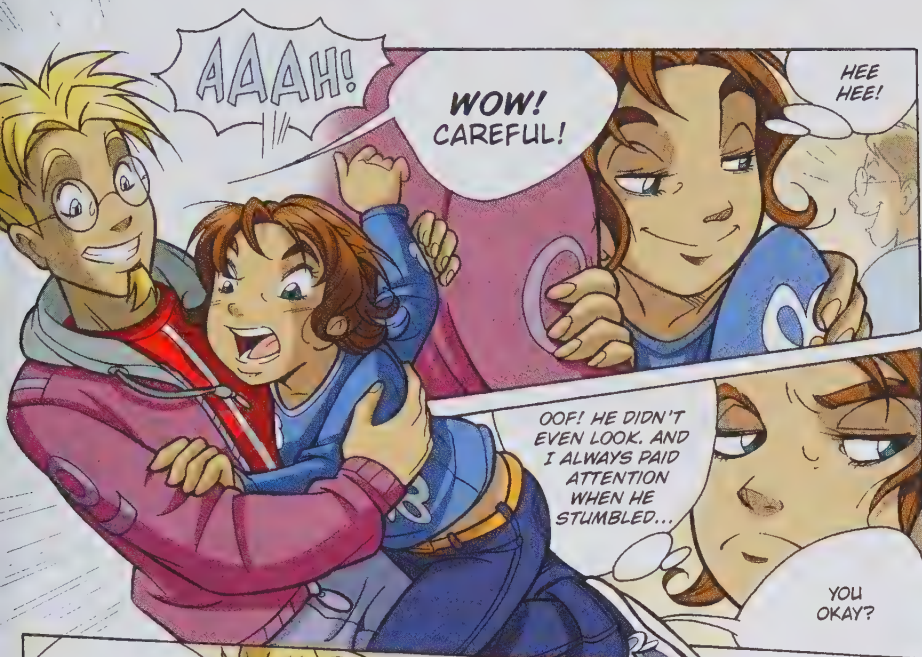
HEY,
THERE'S
JOEL!

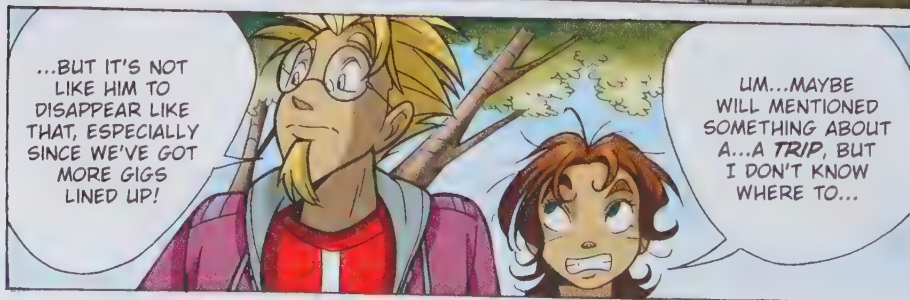
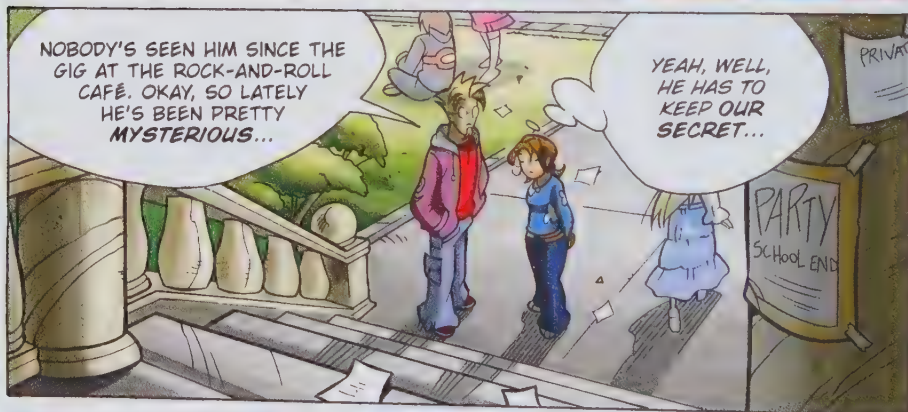
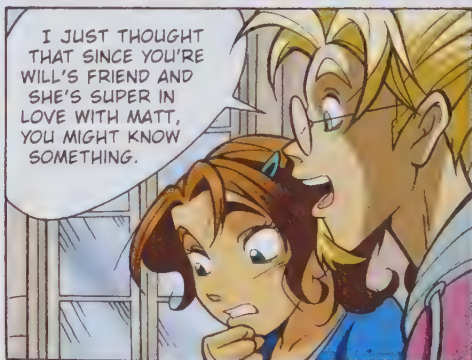
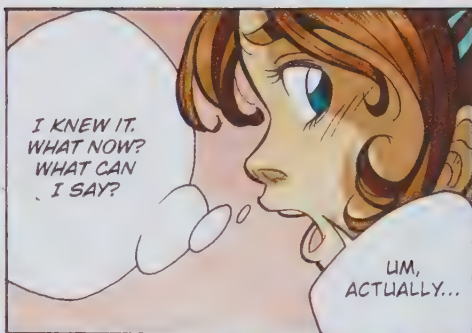
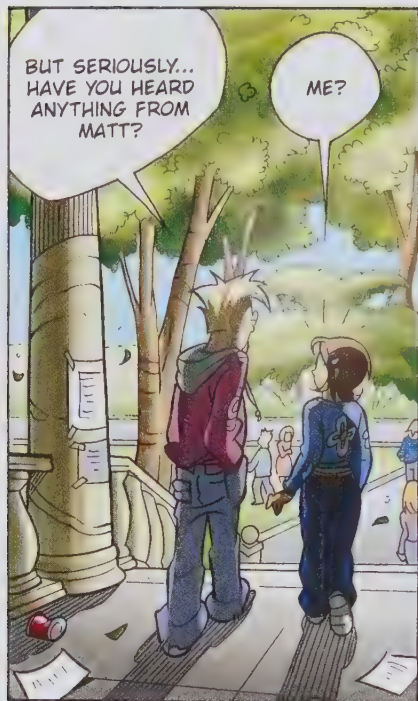
CHOMP
CIOMP

HEY,
JOEL!

WHAT DO I CARE?
MARTIN MIGHT
HAVE A NEW SPECIAL
FRIEND, BUT I HAVE
A STRONG AND
STABLE FRIEND-
SHIP WITH...

STOMP







WHERE...
WHERE AM I?

MY FOOTPRINTS
SLOWLY FADE
AWAY...

...AND I'M ALONE IN
THIS PLACE FULL OF
NOTHINGNESS!

EVERYTHING'S FLAT.
THERE ARE NO OTHER LIVING
CREATURES, NO SOUNDS,
NO NOISES...

NOTHING
AT ALL.

WHERE'D
I END UP?

HOW LONG
HAVE I BEEN HERE?
MINUTES? HOURS?
DAYS?

WHERE ARE YOU, WILL?
AT TIMES, I FEEL LIKE
I'M GOING CRAZY WITH
LONELINESS...

...AND OTHERS,
I FEEL LIKE I'M
BEING WATCHED...

...LIKE NOW!

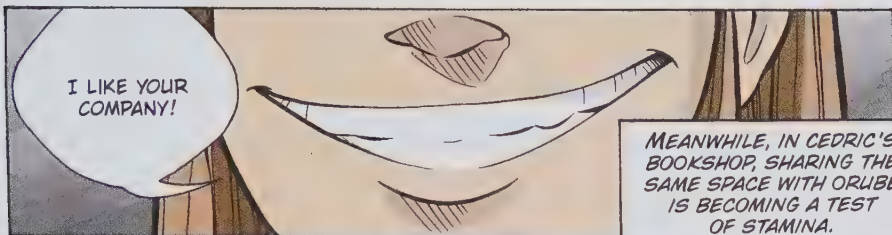
AAAH!
WHO
ARE
YOU?

ANSWER! I FEEL
EYES FIXED ON ME,
FOLLOWING ME...

I KNOW YOU'RE
THERE, SOMEWHERE IN
THE EMPTINESS... BUT
THE CRAZIEST THING...

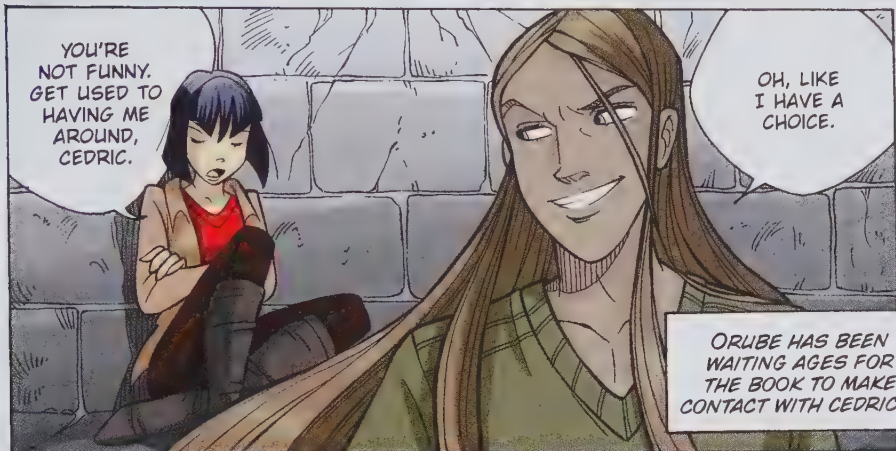
WHO
ARE
YOU?

...IS THAT YOUR
PRESENCE IS
THE ONLY THING
KEEPING ME
COMPANY.



I LIKE YOUR
COMPANY!

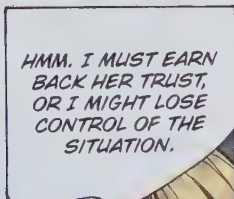
MEANWHILE, IN CEDRIC'S
BOOKSHOP, SHARING THE
SAME SPACE WITH ORUBE
IS BECOMING A TEST
OF STAMINA.



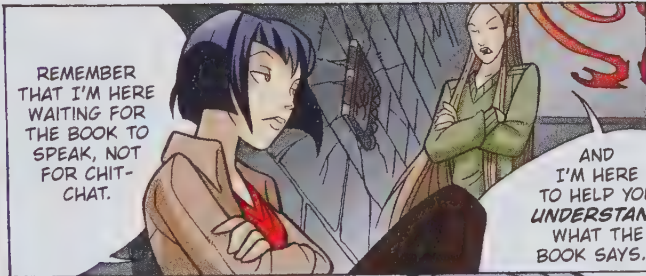
YOU'RE
NOT FUNNY.
GET USED TO
HAVING ME
AROUND,
CEDRIC.

OH, LIKE
I HAVE A
CHOICE.

ORUBE HAS BEEN
WAITING AGES FOR
THE BOOK TO MAKE
CONTACT WITH CEDRIC...

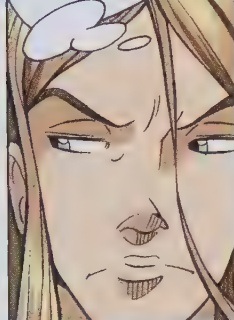


HMM. I MUST EARN
BACK HER TRUST,
OR I MIGHT LOSE
CONTROL OF THE
SITUATION.



REMEMBER
THAT I'M HERE
WAITING FOR
THE BOOK TO
SPEAK, NOT
FOR CHIT-
CHAT.

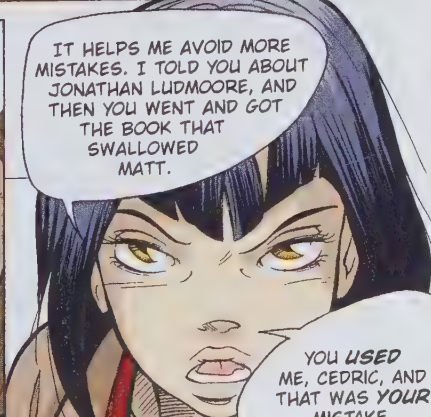
AND
I'M HERE
TO HELP YOU
UNDERSTAND
WHAT THE
BOOK SAYS...



...AND CEDRIC HAS
BEEN WAITING AGES
FOR THE BOOK TO
TALK TO HIM NOW
THAT THEIR DEAL
IS SEALED.



...SO WE COULD
AT LEAST BE CIVIL,
DON'T YOU THINK?
YOUR HOSTILITY
DOESN'T HELP.

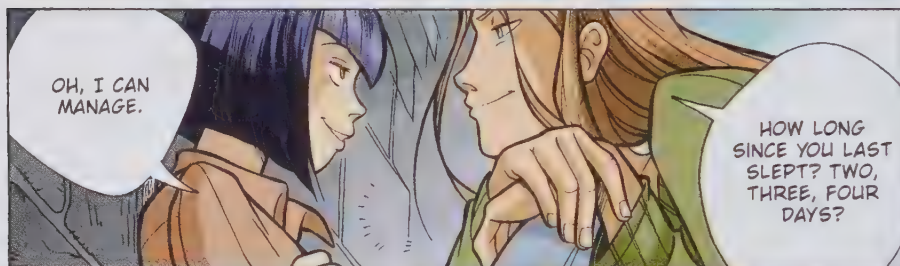


IT HELPS ME AVOID MORE
MISTAKES. I TOLD YOU ABOUT
JONATHAN LUDMOORE, AND
THEN YOU WENT AND GOT
THE BOOK THAT
SWALLOWED
MATT.

YOU USED
ME, CEDRIC, AND
THAT WAS YOUR
MISTAKE.

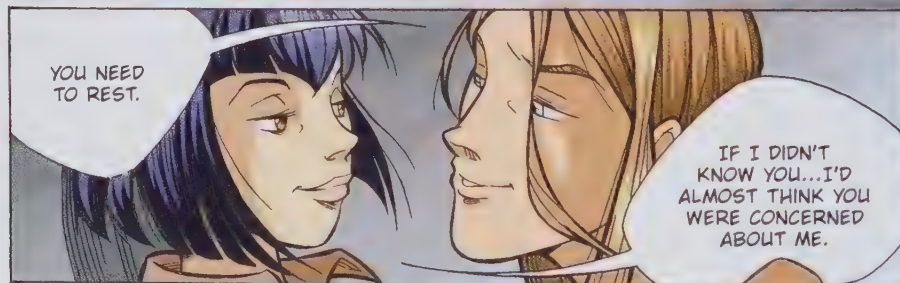


YOU CAN'T WATCH ME FOREVER. AT SOME POINT, YOU'LL HAVE TO CLOSE YOUR EYES TO SLEEP.



OH, I CAN MANAGE.

HOW LONG SINCE YOU LAST SLEPT? TWO, THREE, FOUR DAYS?

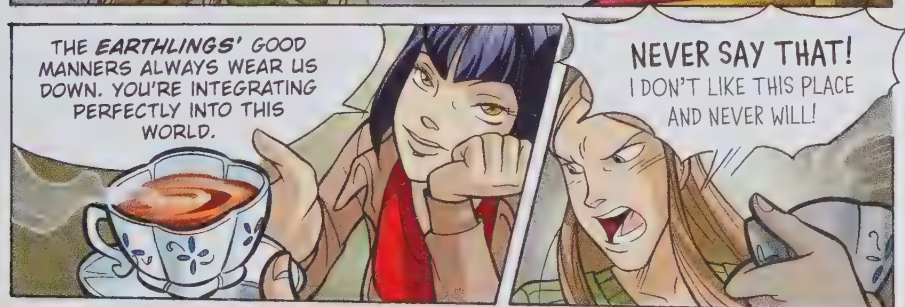
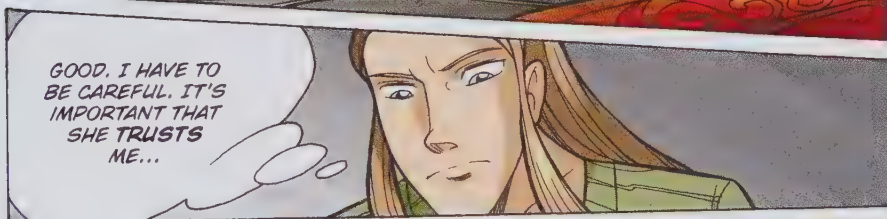
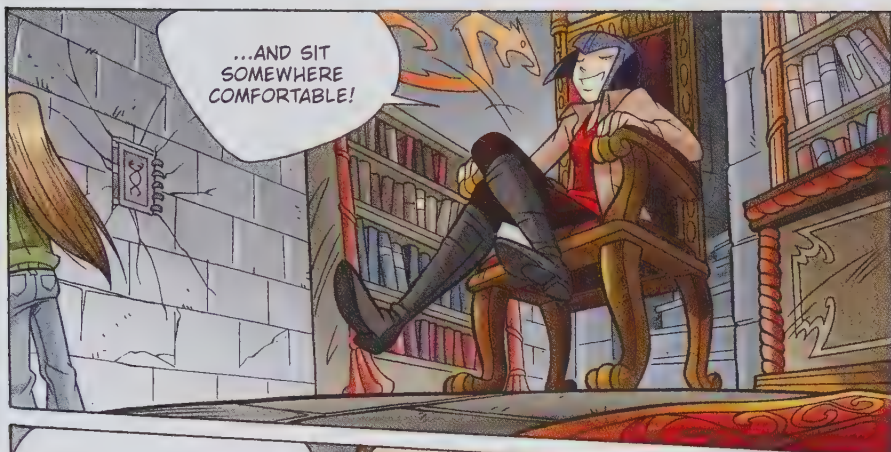


YOU NEED TO REST.

IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU...I'D ALMOST THINK YOU WERE CONCERNED ABOUT ME.



OKAY. TIME TO GET UP...



AND I ASSURE YOU,
YOU'LL LEARN TO ACCEPT
THE SITUATION. IT'S
NOT SO TERRIBLE
DOWN HERE.



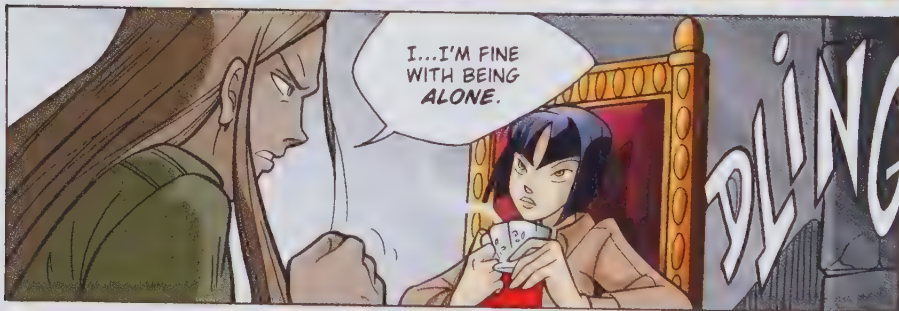
BUT IT'S
AN ALIEN
WORLD!
HOW CAN
I ACCEPT
THAT?



WE ARE THE ALIENS.
ONCE YOU GET
THAT, YOU'LL FEEL
LESS ALONE.



I...I'M FINE
WITH BEING
ALONE.



YOU'D BETTER
GET THE DOOR...
IT WAS WISE TO
KEEP THE SHOP
CLOSED FOR
A WHILE.

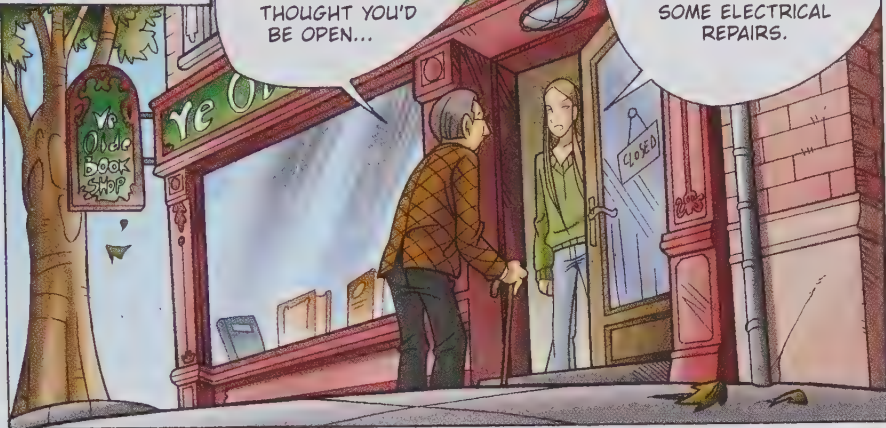
"BUT YOUR CUSTOMERS
WILL GET FED UP IF
YOU NEVER OPEN!"



"YES, OPENING UP!
MAYBE THAT'S THE
ONLY WAY TO EARN
HER TRUST BACK."

I CAME BY
YESTERDAY AND THE
DAY BEFORE. I
THOUGHT YOU'D
BE OPEN...

I'M SORRY. I HAD
TO CLOSE FOR
SOME ELECTRICAL
REPAIRS.



I UNDERSTAND.
HAVE MY BOOKS
ARRIVED?

LET ME
CHECK.

"I CAN'T LIE TO ORUBE,
NOT OUTRIGHT..."

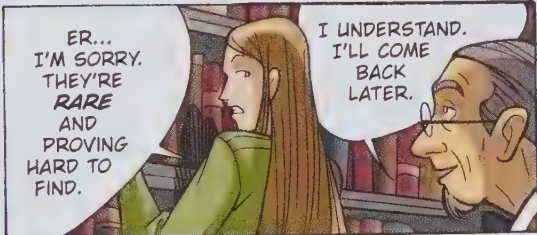
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...but I can
OMIT THE
TRUTH!

WHAT WAS
THAT?

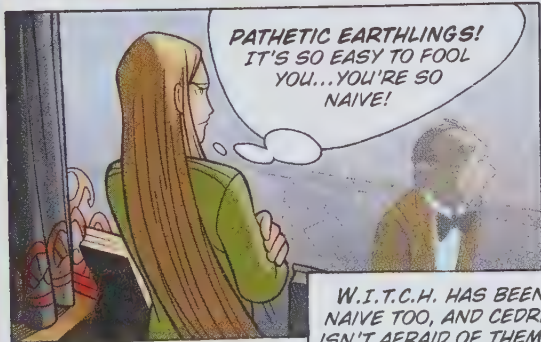
ER...
I'M SORRY.
THEY'RE
RARE
AND
PROVING
HARD TO
FIND.

I UNDERSTAND.
I'LL COME
BACK
LATER.



PATHETIC EARTHLINGS!
IT'S SO EASY TO FOOL
YOU...YOU'RE SO
NAIVE!

W.I.T.C.H. HAS BEEN
NAIVE TOO, AND CEDRIC
ISN'T AFRAID OF THEM...



BUT HE IS AFRAID OF ORUBE. SOMETHING ABOUT HER FRIGHTENS HIM. HE BLAMES HER INTELLIGENCE, HER EYES, SO DIFFERENT AND PIERCING...

SHE'S DIFFERENT. SHE'S NOT HUMAN.

HE'S BLIND TO THE FACT THAT HIS FEELINGS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HIS EVIL PLANS!

SORRY FOR THE INTERRUPTION... OH!

SHE'S FINALLY ASLEEP.

FUNNY. WHEN SHE'S ASLEEP, SHE SEEMS HARMLESS.

SHE LOOKS SO SWEET...

...AND HELPLESS!

A FEW BLOCKS
AWAY...

I DIDN'T MEAN TO,
I SWEAR!

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO
SAY, THEN I CAME UP WITH
THE *TRIP*. IT WAS THE FIRST
THING THAT POPPED INTO
MY HEAD.

**GREAT
IDEA!**

I TRIPPED,
AND THEN...

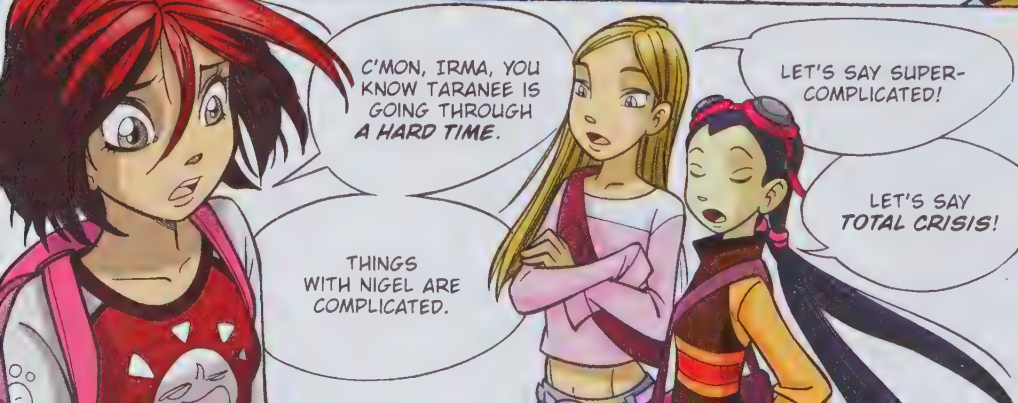
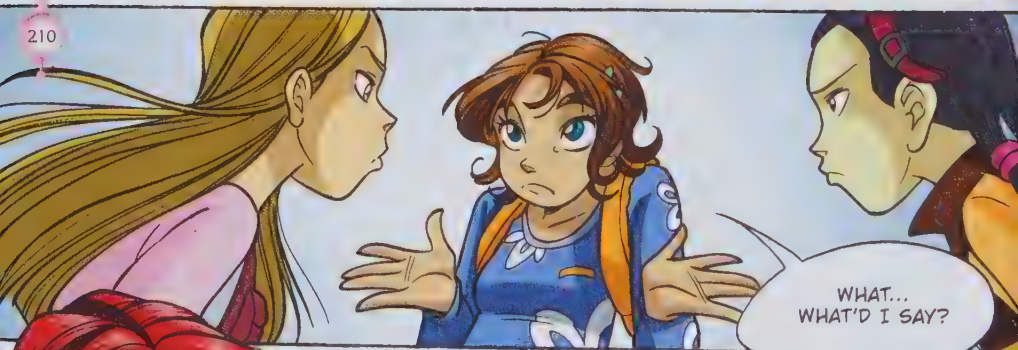
LEAPING
INTO JOEL'S
ARMS TO TALK
ABOUT MATT
IS THE WORST
THING YOU
COULD'VE
DONE.

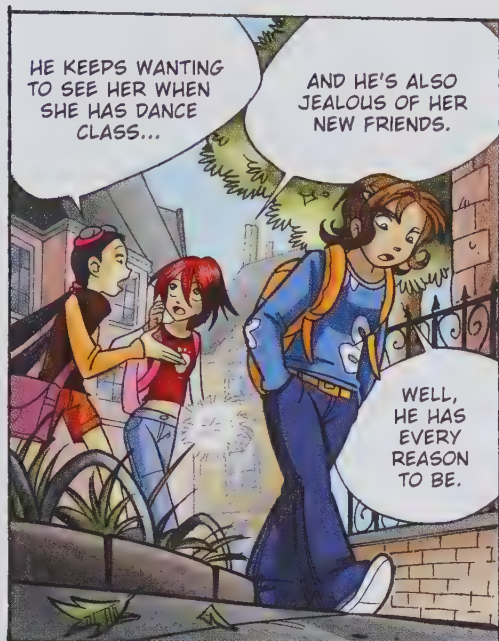
DO YOU
REALIZE
YOU JUST
COMPLICATED
THINGS? AS IF
THEY WEREN'T
BAD ENOUGH
ALREADY!

NOW JOEL
THINKS MATT
IS TRAVELING
SOMEWHERE.

UH-OH!
MISS COOK
IS GRUMPY
TODAY.

NOW SHE ONLY
GETS ALONG WITH
"*SNAKE JENSEN*"
AND CAN'T PUT UP WITH
HER *OLD FRIENDS'*
MISTAKES!





HE KEEPS WANTING
TO SEE HER WHEN
SHE HAS DANCE
CLASS...

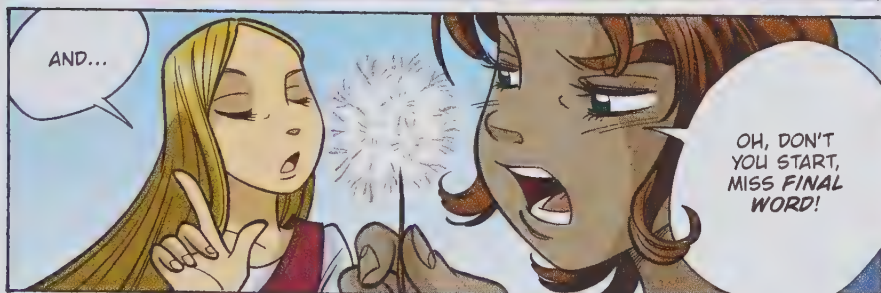
AND HE'S ALSO
JEALOUS OF HER
NEW FRIENDS.

WELL,
HE HAS
EVERY
REASON
TO BE.



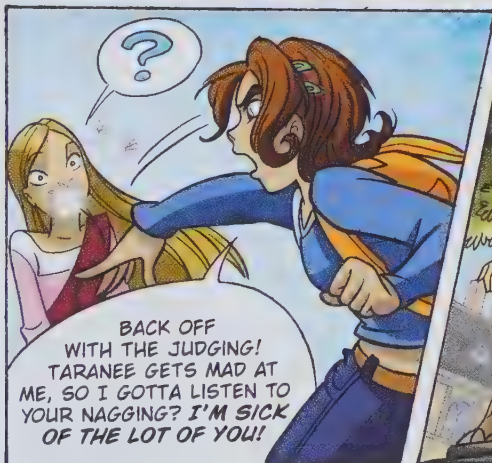
YOU KNOW SHE'S
GOT ISSUES, SO
CUT HER SOME
SLACK.

OH,
WE'VE
ALL GOT
PROBLEMS.

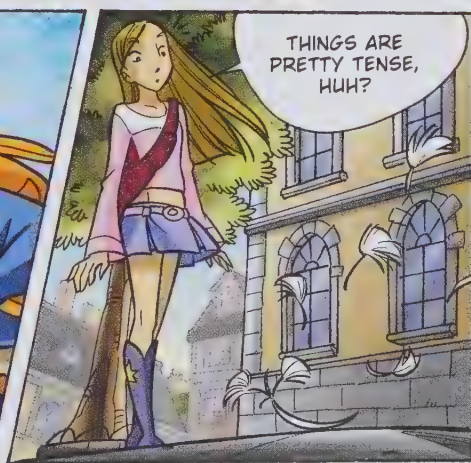


AND...

OH, DON'T
YOU START,
MISS FINAL
WORD!



BACK OFF
WITH THE JUDGING!
TARANEE GETS MAD AT
ME, SO I GOTTA LISTEN TO
YOUR NAGGING? I'M SICK
OF THE LOT OF YOU!



THINGS ARE
PRETTY TENSE,
HUH?

THAT AFTERNOON,
THE HALE RESIDENCE.

IT'S TRUE, WILL.
WE'RE ALL TENSE—
YOU MORE
THAN ANYONE,
OBVIOUSLY!

WELL, YOU KNOW, MY
BOYFRIEND'S TRAPPED
IN A MAGICAL BOOK, AND
IF THAT'S NOT BAD ENOUGH,
SOON EVERYONE
WILL THINK HE'S
DISAPPEARED...

THAT'S WHY
WE'RE GOING
TO SEND A NICE
E-MAIL TO ALL
HIS FRIENDS,
SIGNED BY
MATT.

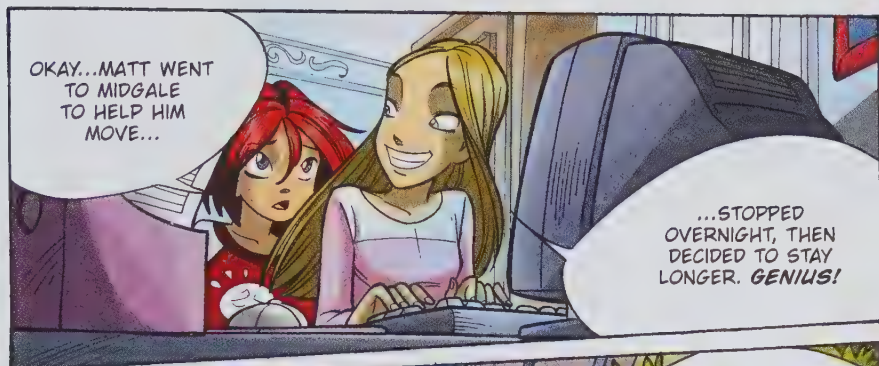
I'M NOT SO
SURE IT'S A
GOOD IDEA.

AU CONTRAIRE.
IT'S THE PERFECT WAY
TO REASSURE EVERYONE.
LET'S WRITE THAT MATT
MET AN OLD PAL...

HMM,
WHAT SHALL
WE CALL HIM...?
STEVEN?

ENVOI/VM...

ciao gente,
ho incontrato un vecchio
amico, forse ve lo ricordo
si chiama



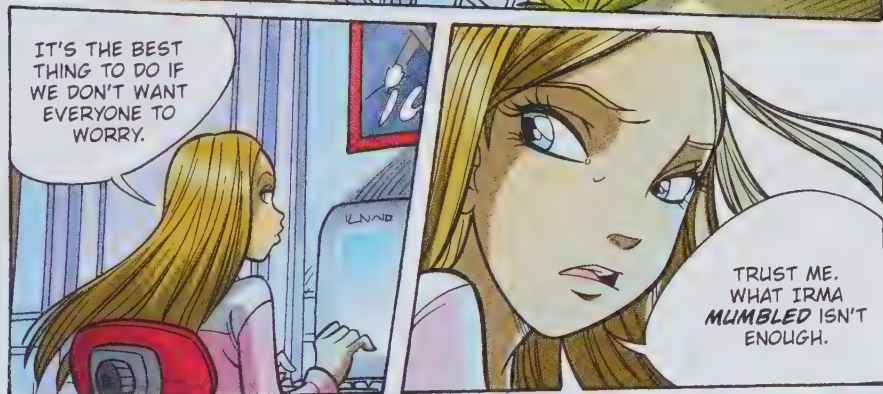
OKAY...MATT WENT
TO MIDGALE
TO HELP HIM
MOVE...

...STOPPED
OVERNIGHT, THEN
DECIDED TO STAY
LONGER. **GENIUS!**



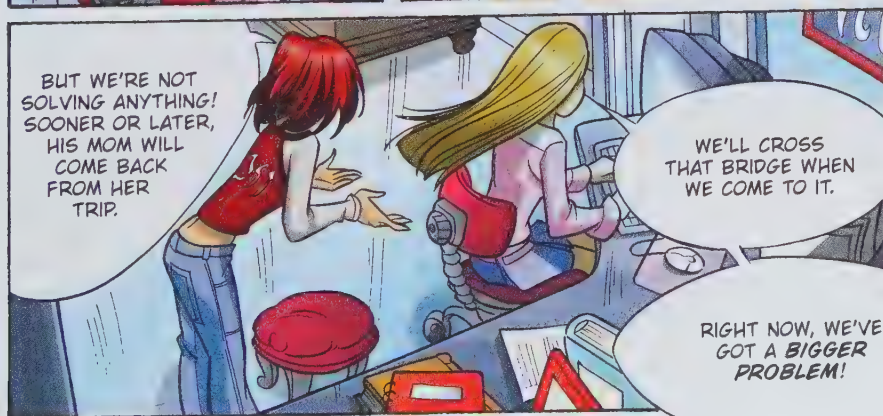
UM...
I DUNNO...

IT'LL WORK!
REMEMBER THAT,
WHEN HE NEEDED TO,
MATT MADE A LOT OF
STUFF UP TO COVER
FOR US.



IT'S THE BEST
THING TO DO IF
WE DON'T WANT
EVERYONE TO
WORRY.

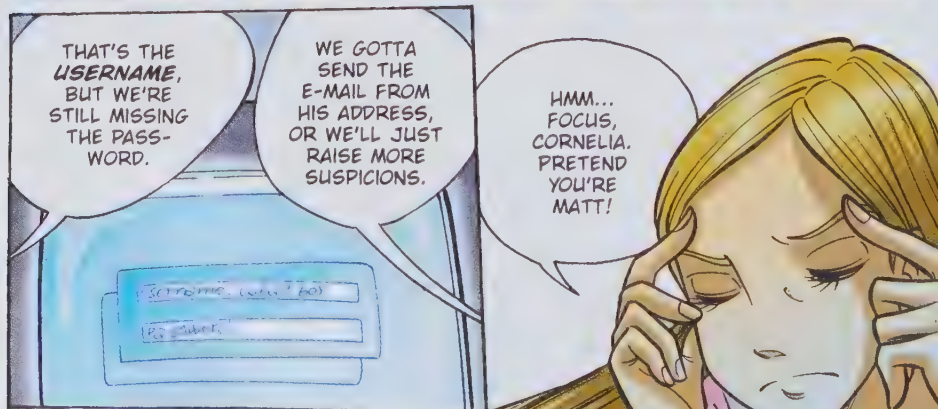
TRUST ME.
WHAT IRMA
MUMBLED ISN'T
ENOUGH.

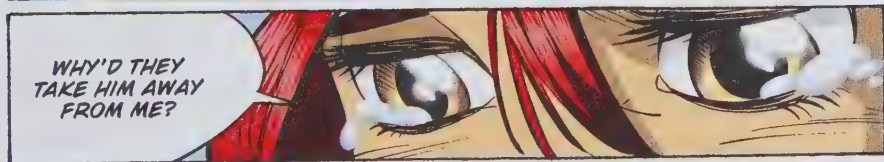
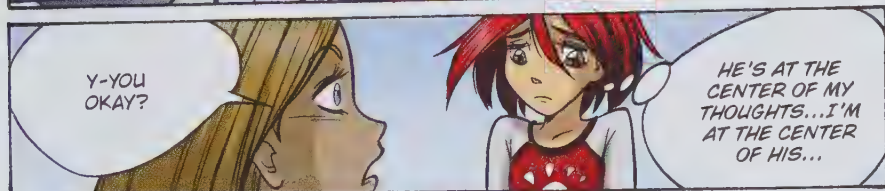
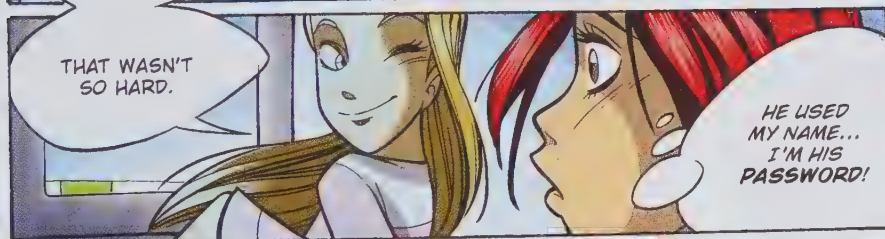
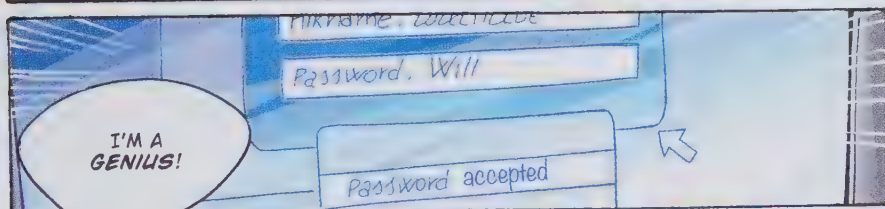
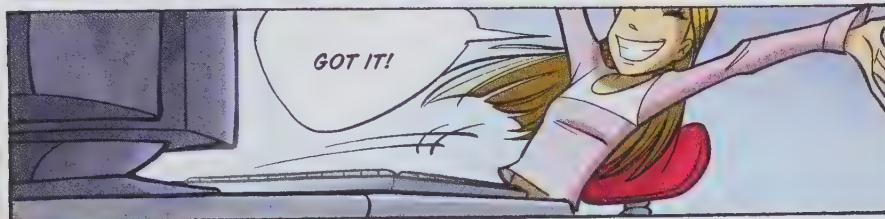
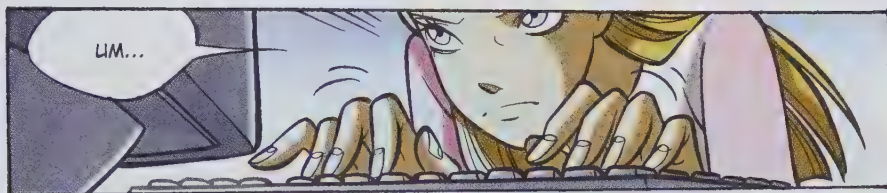


BUT WE'RE NOT
SOLVING ANYTHING!
SOONER OR LATER,
HIS MOM WILL
COME BACK
FROM HER
TRIP.

WE'LL CROSS
THAT BRIDGE WHEN
WE COME TO IT.

RIGHT NOW, WE'VE
GOT A **BIGGER**
PROBLEM!





WILL...

IT DOESN'T MAKE
SENSE! WHAT DOES
THAT BOOK WANT?

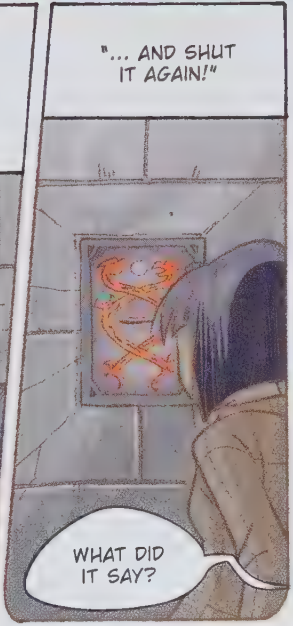
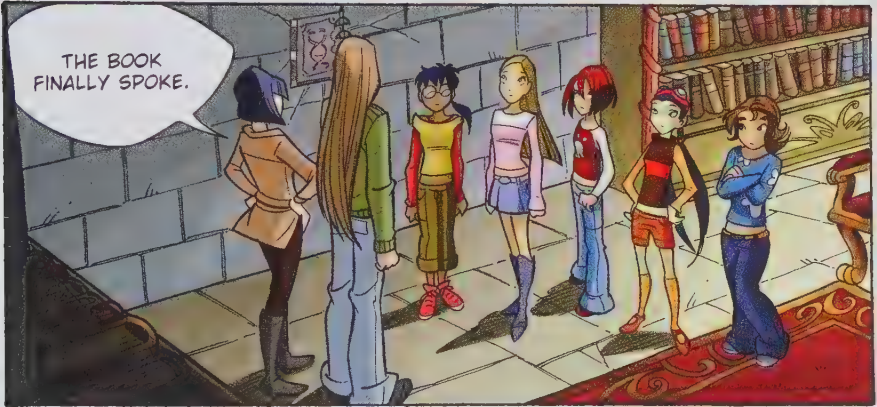
WHY'D IT
TAKE MATT?
MY MATT...

WE'LL GET
HIM OUT OF
THERE.

I
PROMISE!

IT'S ORUBE
FROM THE
BOOKSHOP.

Hi, Will.
I've got
HOT NEWS!



C'MON, CEDRIC!
WHAT DID IT
SAY?

I'M NOT SURE I
UNDERSTOOD...

Uh-oh!
That's bad news
for him!

ARE YOU KIDDING?
I'M WARNING YOU,
CEDRIC! I DON'T
KNOW HOW MUCH
LONGER I CAN
CONTROL
MYSELF!

WAIT, WILL.
THIS TIME, IT'S
NOT CEDRIC'S
FAULT.

THE BOOK'S
WORDS WERE
COMPLICATED...
AND NEED TO BE
INTERPRETED.



"THE GLEAM IN THE
LIQUID ABYSS LIGHTS
UP THE VOICES OF THE
ENCHANTRESSES!"

THAT'S WHAT
THE BOOK
SAID.

IS THAT IT?
WHAT'S IT MEAN?

IT'S A
RIDDLE.

THAT'S
ALL THERE
WAS.

CLEVER! CAN
YOU SOLVE
IT TOO?

LET'S PUT
OUR HEADS
TOGETHER.

Tsk. Now the
snake is using
the PLURAL!

I'VE
ALWAYS HATED
RIDDLES.

WE JUST HAD
TO GET THE BOOK
THAT LIKES TO PLAY
MYSTERIOUS!

IT'S
NONSENSE.

IT *MUST* MEAN
SOMETHING...
BUT WHAT?

"THE GLEAM IN THE
LIQUID ABYSS..."

"... LIGHTS UP THE VOICES
OF THE ENCHANTRESSES."

Heatherfield

MYSTERIOUS INDEED...

THEY SAY SILENCE
BRINGS COUNSEL.

CAN I SAY
SOMETHING,
WILL?

YOU KNOW
HOW TO DECIPHER
THE RIDDLE?

NO, BUT I
KNOW YOU
SHOULD TAKE
A NAP. YOU
ALMOST FELL
ASLEEP IN
CLASS!

=YAWNWN=
ACTUALLY, I'M
EXHAUSTED!

I COULDN'T
SLEEP LAST NIGHT.
I KEPT TRYING
TO WORK OUT
THAT CURSED
RIDDLE!

I WAS
THINKING
ABOUT IT
TOO.

WHY DO I NEVER
LISTEN TO MY
MOTHER?

WHAT'S
YOUR MOM
GOT TO DO
WITH THE
RIDDLE?

SHE GIVES
ME ALL THOSE
MAGAZINES
WITH RIDDLES...
AND WHAT DO
I DO? IGNORE
THEM!

UM,
I DON'T
THINK THAT A
FEW REBUSES...

I'D BE
AN EXPERT BY
NOW. AS IT IS,
I'M SUNK!

BUT
YOU'RE
A GREAT
SWIMMER!
YOU'LL
SEE, WE'LL
SOLVE IT.

WILL!

HEY, WILL,
IT'S YOUR
MOM!

AS PUNCTUAL
AS A SWISS
CLOCK.

HERE
I AM!

YOU DIDN'T FORGET
I WAS PICKING YOU
UP, DID YOU?

NEIN!

HUH...
YOU SPEAK
GERMAN
NOW?

SWISS
GERMAN,
TO BE
PRECISE!

UM...
SORRY TO BUTT
IN, BUT WILL
SAID
YOU'LL BUY YOUR
WEDDING DRESS AT
DUMONT'S. IS
THAT RIGHT?

YES...

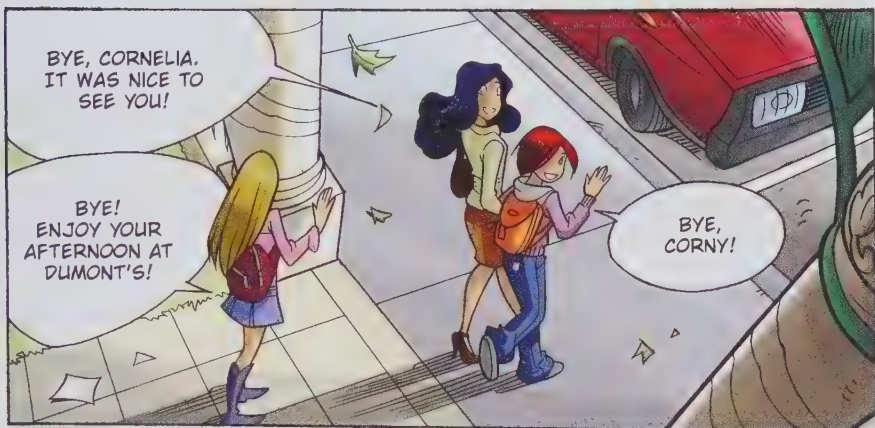
WOW!
IT'S THE BEST
DRESS SHOP IN
ALL OF HEATHER-
FIELD! SO ELEGANT
AND REFINED.
YOU COULDN'T
HAVE CHOSEN
BETTER!

FORGIVE
HER, MOM.
WHEN IT COMES
TO **WEDDINGS**,
SHE'S EVEN WORSE
THAN YOU.

I envy you
so much!

Let's switch
places?

LET'S GO, WILL.
THE APPOINTMENT IS
RIGHT AFTER LUNCH.



BYE, CORNELIA.
IT WAS NICE TO
SEE YOU!

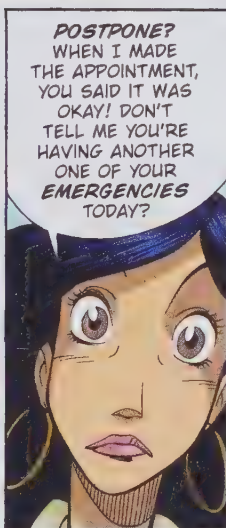
BYE!
ENJOY YOUR
AFTERNOON AT
DUMONT'S!

BYE,
CORNÝ!



GET IN! WE'RE RUNNING LATE.
WE STILL HAVE TO EAT, AND
MS. DUMONT DOESN'T
LIKE BEING KEPT
WAITING.

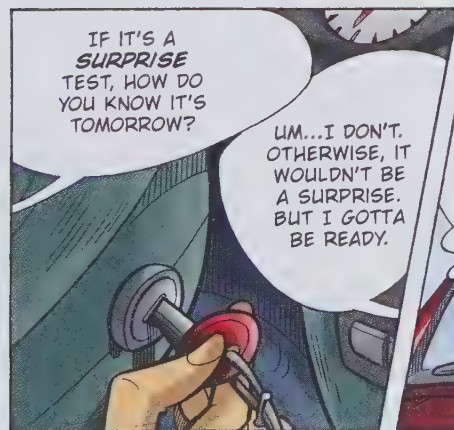
CALM DOWN!
THERE'S NO RUSH,
AND WE COULD ALWAYS
POSTPONE. I DON'T KNOW IF...



POSTPONE?
WHEN I MADE
THE APPOINTMENT,
YOU SAID IT WAS
OKAY! DON'T
TELL ME YOU'RE
HAVING ANOTHER
ONE OF YOUR
EMERGENCIES
TODAY?

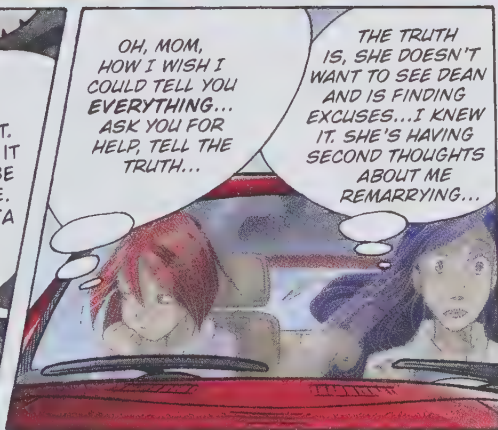


UM, NO...AT LEAST
NOT NOW, BUT LATER...
WELL...I'M NOT COMING
TO DEAN'S. I GOTTA
STUDY FOR A SURPRISE
MATH TEST!



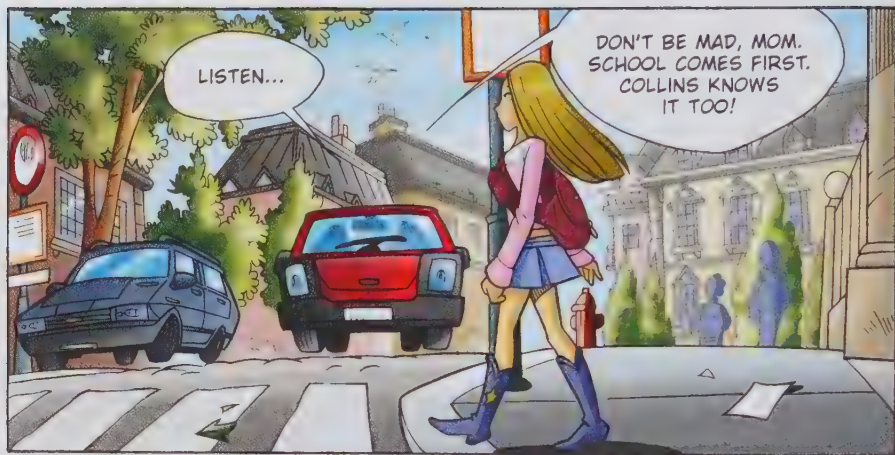
IF IT'S A
SURPRISE
TEST, HOW DO
YOU KNOW IT'S
TOMORROW?

UM...I DON'T.
OTHERWISE, IT
WOULDN'T BE
A SURPRISE.
BUT I GOTTA
BE READY.



OH, MOM,
HOW I WISH I
COULD TELL YOU
EVERYTHING...
ASK YOU FOR
HELP, TELL THE
TRUTH...

THE TRUTH
IS, SHE DOESN'T
WANT TO SEE DEAN
AND IS FINDING
EXCUSES...I KNEW
IT. SHE'S HAVING
SECOND THOUGHTS
ABOUT ME
REARRYING...

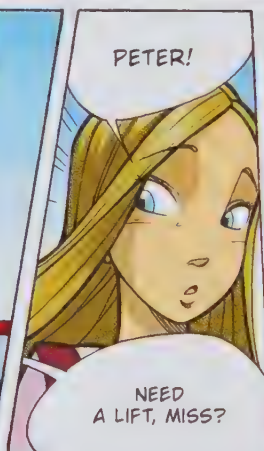


LISTEN...

DON'T BE MAD, MOM.
SCHOOL COMES FIRST.
COLLINS KNOWS
IT TOO!



OOF! I MISSED
WILL AGAIN. HEY,
BUT THAT'S...



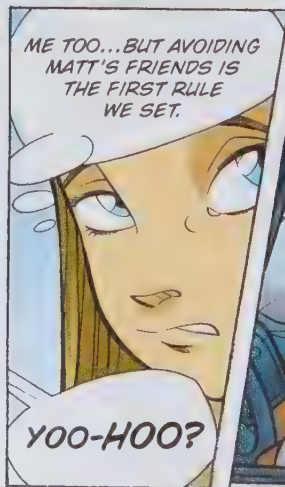
PETER!

NEED
A LIFT, MISS?



UM...
THAT'S NICE
OF YOU, BUT
I'LL WALK.

C'MON.
DON'T MAKE ME
BEG. I'M HAPPY TO
TAKE YOU HOME.

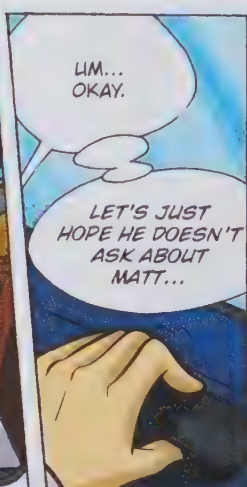


ME TOO...BUT AVOIDING
MATT'S FRIENDS IS
THE FIRST RULE
WE SET.

YOO-HOO?

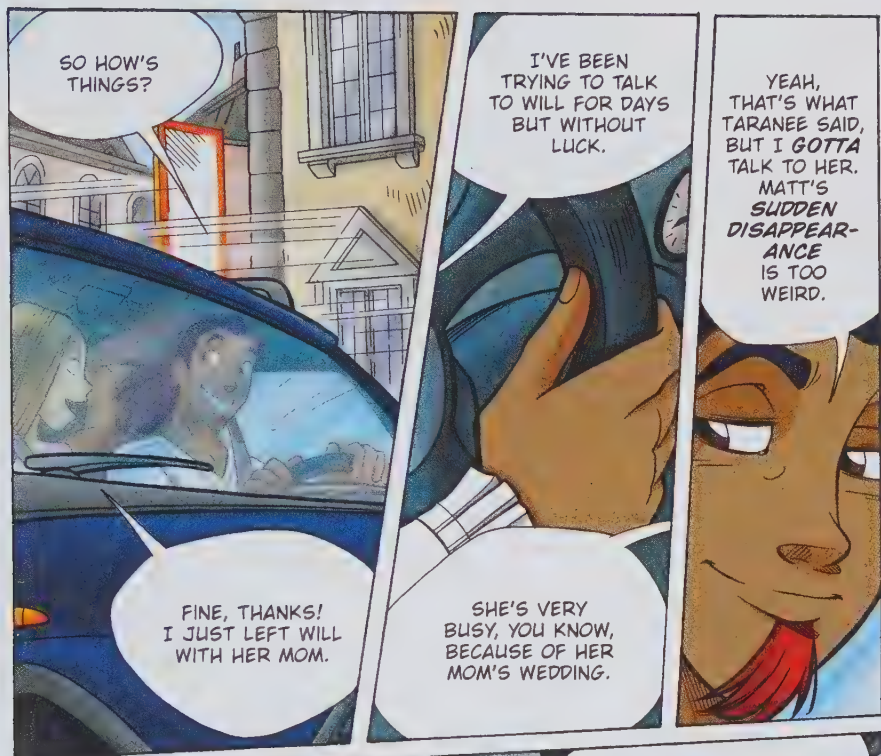


WHAT'S TO
THINK ABOUT?
HOP IN!



UM...
OKAY.

LET'S JUST
HOPE HE DOESN'T
ASK ABOUT
MATT...



SO HOW'S THINGS?

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TALK TO WILL FOR DAYS BUT WITHOUT LUCK.

YEAH, THAT'S WHAT TARANEE SAID, BUT I GOTTA TALK TO HER. MATT'S **SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE** IS TOO WEIRD.

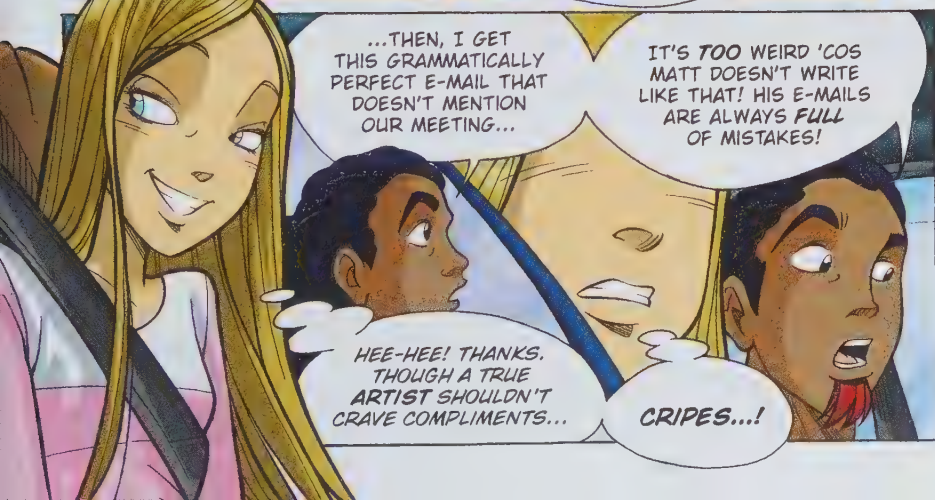
FINE, THANKS! I JUST LEFT WILL WITH HER MOM.

SHE'S VERY BUSY, YOU KNOW, BECAUSE OF HER MOM'S WEDDING.



HERE WE GO. ME AND MY BIG MOUTH... I JUST HAD TO MENTION WILL!

FIRST, HE BLOWS ME OFF...

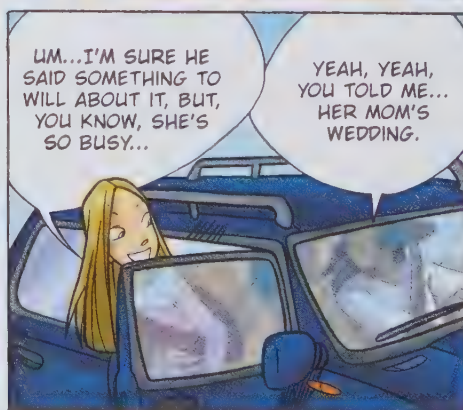
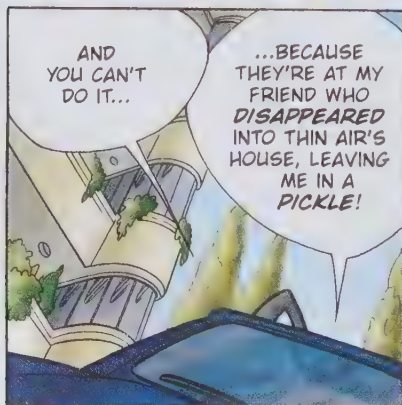
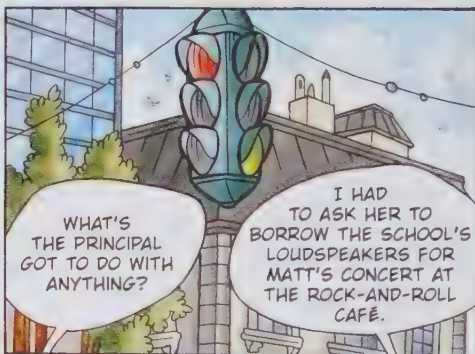


...THEN, I GET THIS GRAMMATICALLY PERFECT E-MAIL THAT DOESN'T MENTION OUR MEETING...

IT'S **TOO WEIRD** 'COS MATT DOESN'T WRITE LIKE THAT! HIS E-MAILS ARE ALWAYS FULL OF MISTAKES!

HEE-HEE! THANKS, THOUGH A TRUE ARTIST SHOULDN'T CRAVE COMPLIMENTS...

CRIPES...!



DUMONT
DRESSMAKERS,
THAT AFTERNOON.

IT'S GORGEOUS.
YOU LOOK
FANTASTIC!

THE GLEAM IN
THE LIQUID ABYSS...
THE MORE I REPEAT IT,
THE MORE OBSCURE
IT GETS.

UM...
I DON'T
KNOW.

SOLVING A RIDDLE
CAN BE DIFFICULT...

...LIKE MAKING
THE RIGHT CHOICE
FOR AN IMPORTANT
OCCASION.

IF MY DEAR
DAUGHTER COULD
TEAR HER EYES
FROM HER PHONE
FOR A MOMENT,
SHE MIGHT GIVE
ME ADVICE.

HUH?

HOW ABOUT
THIS ONE, WILL?
IS IT NICE? OR WAS
THE ONE BEFORE
BETTER?

UM...

WHICH WAS THE
ONE BEFORE
AGAIN?

WILL,
PLEASE!

MS. VANDOM,
I COULDN'T HELP
NOTICING YOUR
INVITATIONS, AND IF
I MAY, THEY'RE
A LITTLE PLAIN.

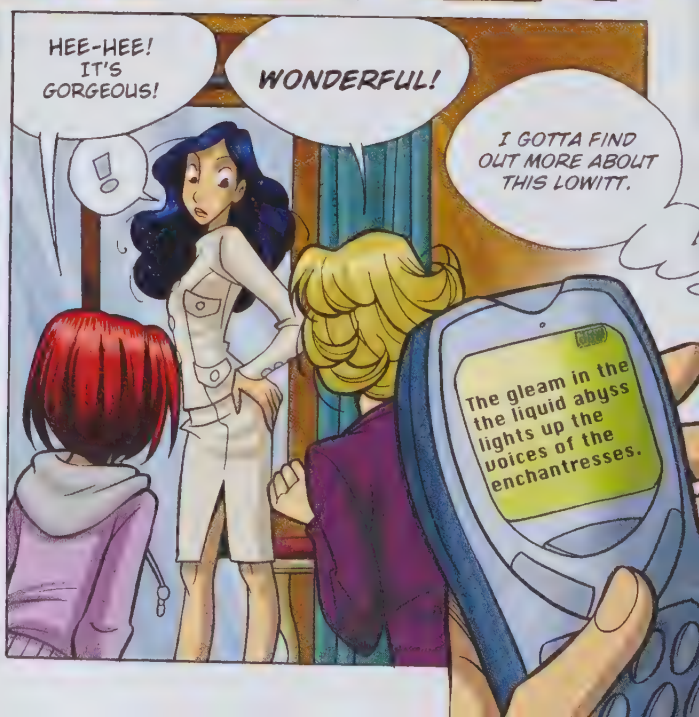
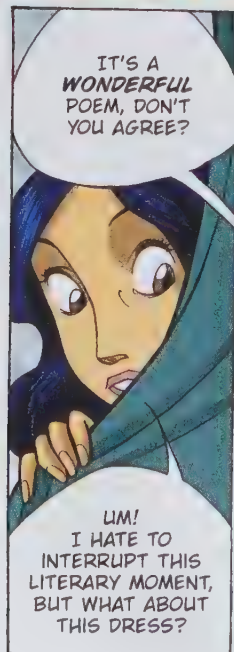
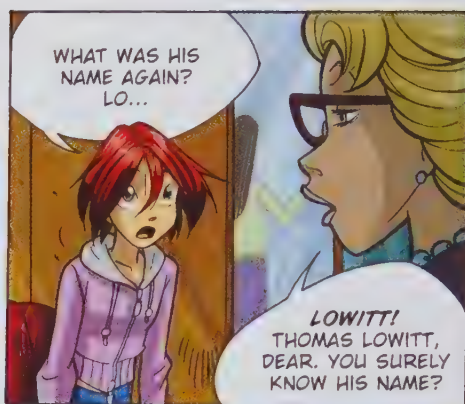
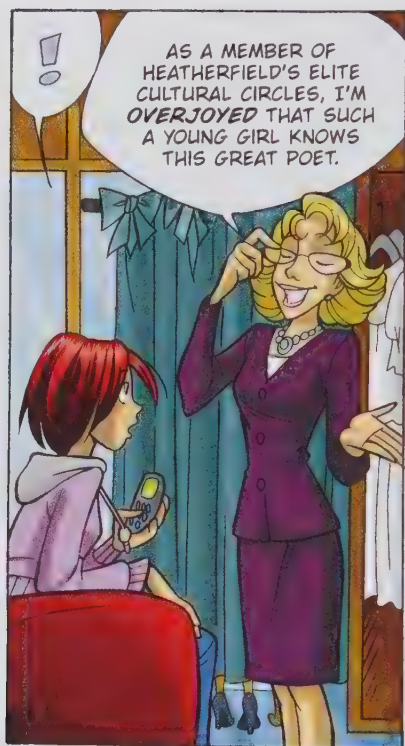
MAYBE
YOU COULD
EMBELLISH
THEM WITH
SOME
POETRY?

I DON'T
KNOW
IF...

I DUNNO WHAT
TO THINK. IT'S
JUST A SENTENCE,
A COMPLICATED
SENTENCE
THAT I GOTTA
UNDERSTAND...

The gleam in the
liquid abyss lights up
the voices of the
enchantresses.

LOWITT!
WONDERFUL!
GREAT CHOICE.



A LITTLE
LATER...

I'VE SEEN TOO MANY
DRESSES FOR TODAY.
MS. DUMONT IS A
BIT ANNOYING. SHE
SAYS THEY'RE ALL
WONDERFUL!

WHAT AN AMAZING
DISCOVERY!
THERE MUST BE
A CONNECTION
BETWEEN LOWITT
AND THE PLACE
WE GOTTA
FIND.

PLANET MOM
TO DAUGHTER!
ARE YOU
LISTENING?

OF COURSE!
THEY WERE ALL
WONDERFUL!

DON'T YOU
START TOO!
AT THOSE
PRICES,
MY P.J.'S
WOULD BE
TOO.

"I THINK
I SHOULD TALK
TO DEAN BEFORE
PICKING ONE."

I'LL
TAKE YOU
HOME.

CASHIER
OH, THANKS, DARLING,
BUT I CAN'T GO HOME
UNTIL SIX!
HERE'S YOUR
CHANGE.

...

CASHIER

GOOD-BYE!

...

UM...YOU KNOW WHAT, MOM?
I'LL STUDY LATER. RIGHT
NOW I REALLY WANNA SEE
MY FAVORITE PROF!

WHO BETTER
THAN HIM TO TELL
ME ABOUT LOWITT?

YOU SAID
YOU DIDN'T WANT TO
COME...OH WELL. I MUST
REMEMBER TO IGNORE
YOUR MOOD SWINGS!

IN THE
MEANTIME...

DON'T YOU
GET IT? IT'S A
HUGE MESS!

CALM DOWN,
CORNÝ. START
OVER—I DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND
A WORD!

WHAT'S NOT
TO UNDERSTAND?
PETER'S
SUSPICIOUS, AND
THE EQUIPMENT
HE HAS TO
RETURN IS IN
MATT'S
HOUSE!

AND YOU'RE
ALL WOUND
UP. AFTER
ALL, YOU
WERE WITH
PETER...

STOP IT,
HAY LIN.
I'M BEING
SERIOUS!

I TRIED TO
GET IN TOUCH
WITH THEM
BUT....

WHERE ARE
THE OTHERS
ANYWAY?

WAIT. DON'T TELL
ME. TARANEE'S
AT DANCE CLASS?
SHE PRACTICALLY
LIVES AT
JENSEN'S
SCHOOL!

DON'T BE SO GRUMPY.
YOU KNOW THEY'RE
REHEARSING LIKE
CRAZY THESE
DAYS.

THE
SILVER
DRAGON



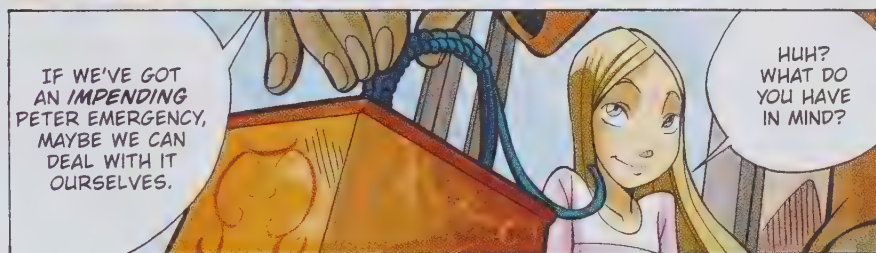
I CAN'T TRACK
DOWN THE
OTHERS EITHER.
WILL'S
PHONE IS
OFF.

WELL, SHE'S GOT
ENOUGH WORRIES,
SO LET'S NOT
DRAG HER INTO
THIS.



WE'LL TELL THEM LATER
WHEN WE MEET UP AT
THE BOOKSHOP.

UM...
I'VE GOT A
BETTER IDEA!

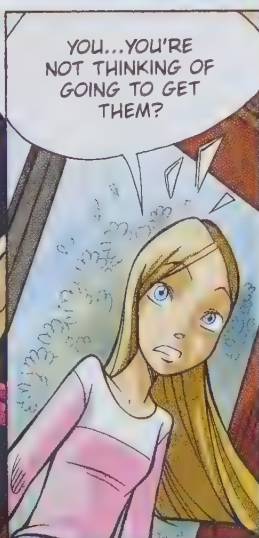


IF WE'VE GOT
AN **IMPENDING**
PETER EMERGENCY,
MAYBE WE CAN
DEAL WITH IT
OURSELVES.

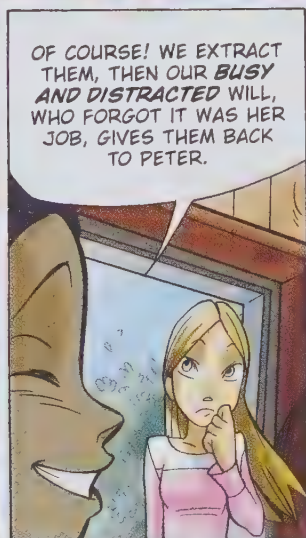
HUH?
WHAT DO
YOU HAVE
IN MIND?



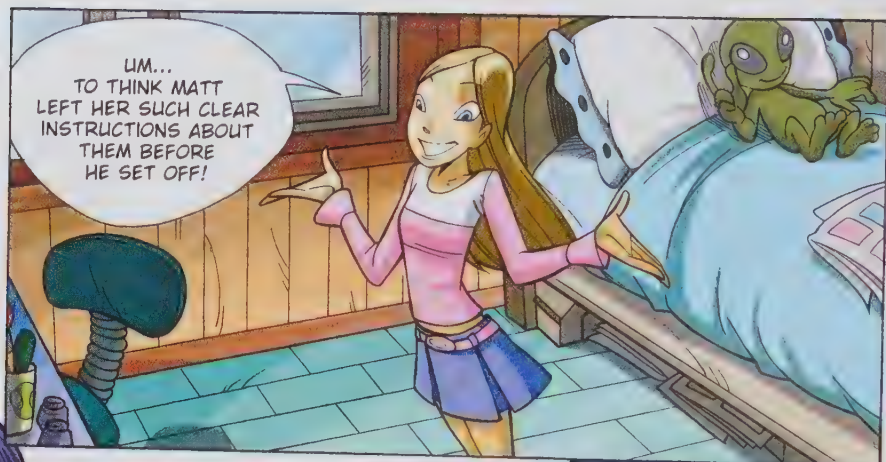
THE
LOUDSPEAKERS
AT MATT'S
ARE THE
PROBLEM,
RIGHT?



YOU...YOU'RE
NOT THINKING OF
GOING TO GET
THEM?



OF COURSE! WE EXTRACT
THEM, THEN OUR **BUSY**
AND DISTRACTED WILL,
WHO FORGOT IT WAS HER
JOB, GIVES THEM BACK
TO PETER.

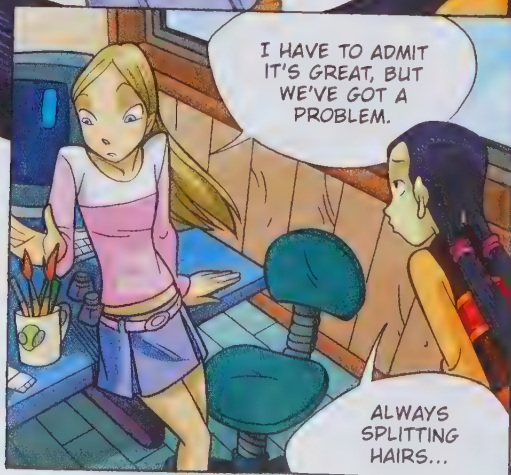


UM...
TO THINK MATT
LEFT HER SUCH CLEAR
INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT
THEM BEFORE
HE SET OFF!



BUT YOU KNOW,
SHE'S SO *BUSY*
ORGANIZING HER
MOM'S WEDDING!
HA-HA-HA!

ISN'T IT AN
AWESOME
PLAN?



I HAVE TO ADMIT
IT'S GREAT, BUT
WE'VE GOT A
PROBLEM.

ALWAYS
SPLITTING
HAIRS...



WELL, IT'S A *BIG*
ONE! HOW DO WE GET
INTO MATT'S HOUSE
WITHOUT THE
KEYS...

"...AND UNINVITED?"

MAY I
COME IN?

HELLO, GIRLS!
SORRY ABOUT
THE MESS...

What
mess?

Actually, compared
to your room, this is
the kingdom of
order!

FAIR
POINT.

CAN I OFFER YOU ANY-
THING? I WAS CHECKING
MY BOOKS...I HAVE TO
PACK THEM UP BEFORE
THE MOVE!

WOW!
YOU'RE
BRINGING THEM
ALL TO OUR
PLACE?

OF
COURSE!

WHAT?

ALL OF
THEM?

WELL, HONEY, I
CAN'T LEAVE THEM
HERE SINCE WE'RE
SELLING THE
APARTMENT, AND
YOU'VE GOT SO
MUCH SPACE...

WE DON'T HAVE
TO FILL ALL
OF IT.

YOU COULD GET RID OF
A FEW. I'M SURE THERE
ARE PLenty THAT ARE
USELESS!

USELESS?
DID YOU SAY
USELESS?

234

BUT THEY'RE
MY BOOKS!

SLICES OF
CULTURE, PIECES
OF MY LIFE!

OKAY, THEN
LET'S SAY...
CLUNKY?

CULTURE IS ALWAYS
CLUNKY FOR THOSE
WHO DON'T UNDER-
STAND IT.

IT'S TIME TO
SOLVE THIS
RIDDLE!

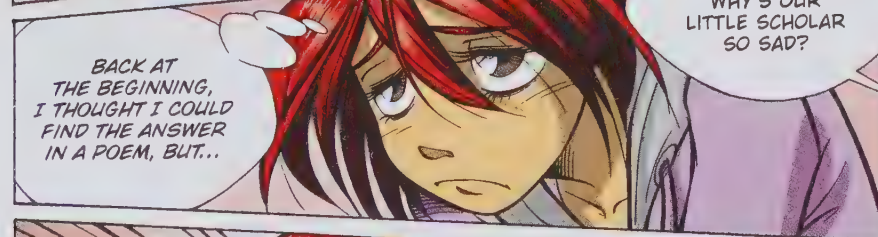
THE
ENCHANTRESSES
AND OTHER
POEMS



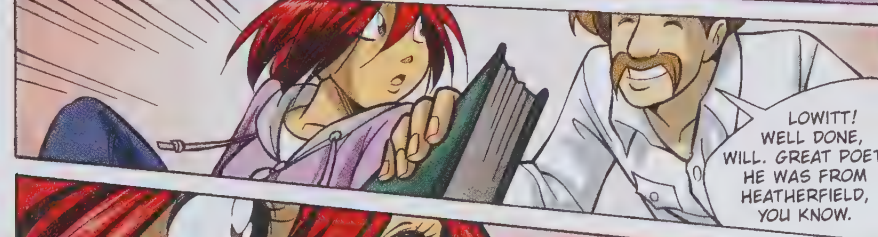
UM...



HOW'D HE
WRITE THIS?
I DON'T GET
IT!



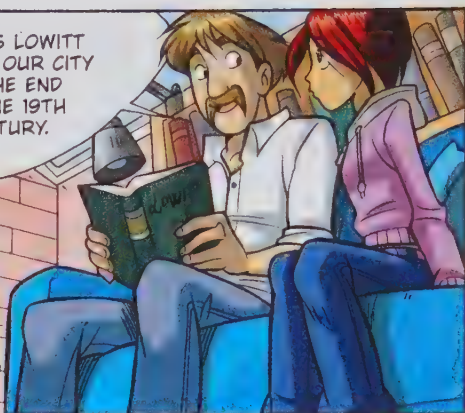
WHY'S OUR
LITTLE SCHOLAR
SO SAD?



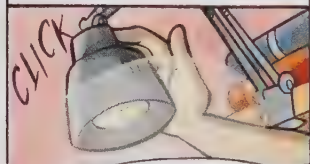
HEATHERFIELD?

SOMETIMES
THE ANSWERS ARE
UNDER OUR NOSES...

THOMAS LOWITT
LIVED IN OUR CITY
AT THE END
OF THE 19TH
CENTURY.



WE DESPERATELY LOOK
FOR THEM, HOPING
A LIGHT WILL CLEAR
THE DARKNESS...



HE WAS INCREDIBLY
SUCCESSFUL, BUT BEFORE
BECOMING A FAMOUS POET,
HE WAS THE CUSTODIAN
OF THE LIGHTHOUSE.

AT LIGHTHOUSE
CAPE?

...THEN, THE ANSWERS
COME SUDDENLY!

WELL, BACK IN THE DAY,
IT WASN'T THERE, BUT IN
A SMALL BAY CALLED
SIREN ISLAND.



I'M GONNA
FAINT!

ARE
YOU OKAY,
WILL?

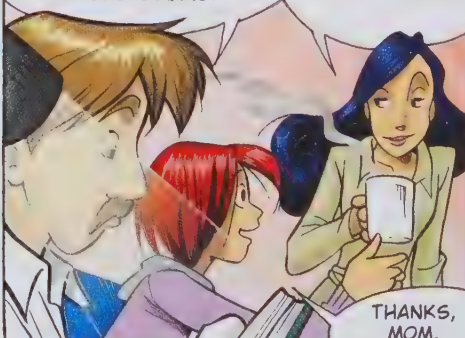
YEAH,
IT'S NOTHING!
MR. COLLINS'S
STORIES ARE
ALWAYS SO
EXCITING...



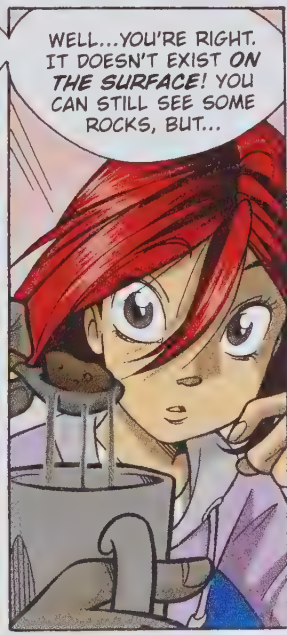
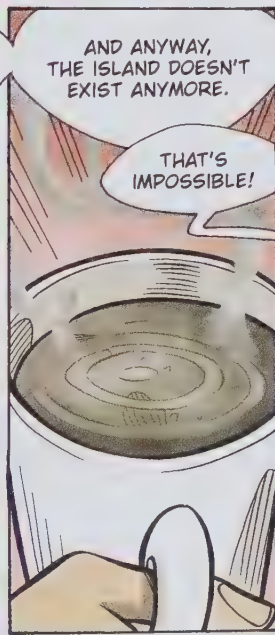
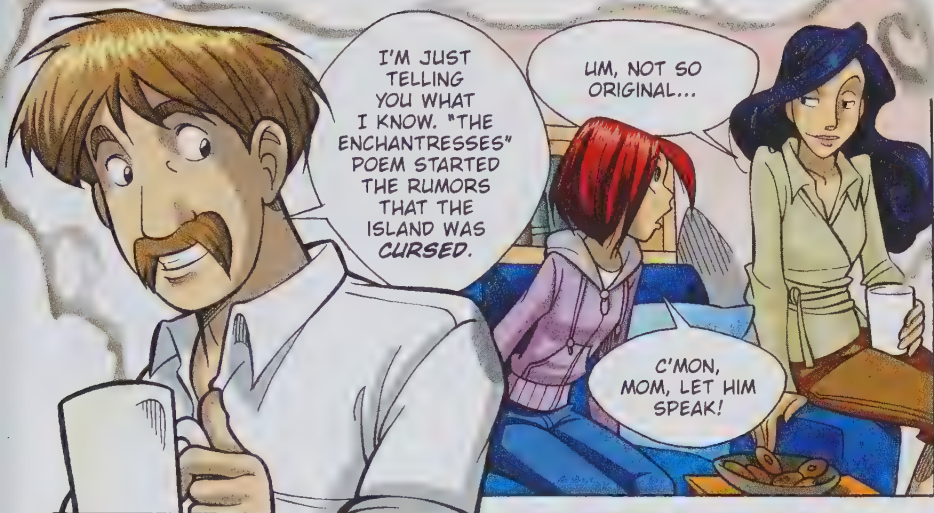
CARRY ON!

SIREN ISLAND WASN'T
VERY POPULAR, AND IT
DIDN'T HAVE MANY
CUSTODIANS.

ANOTHER
CURSE?



THANKS,
MOM.



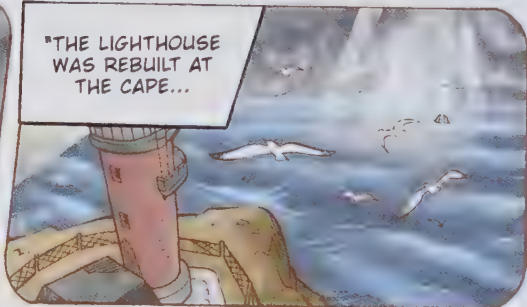
"AT THE BEGINNING OF
THE 20TH CENTURY, A
STORM HIT THE COAST..."



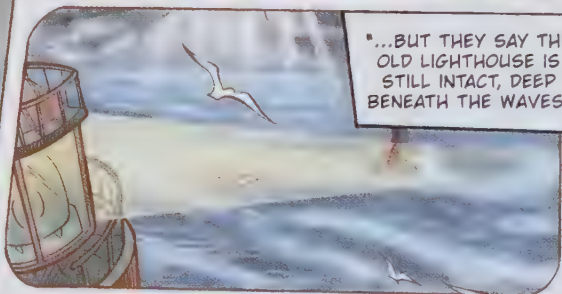
"...AND SIREN
ISLAND SANK
INTO THE ABYSS."



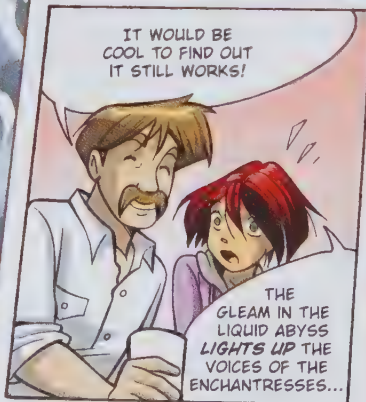
"THE LIGHTHOUSE
WAS REBUILT AT
THE CAPE..."



"...BUT THEY SAY THE
OLD LIGHTHOUSE IS
STILL INTACT, DEEP
BENEATH THE WAVES."

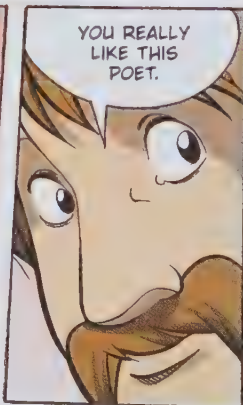


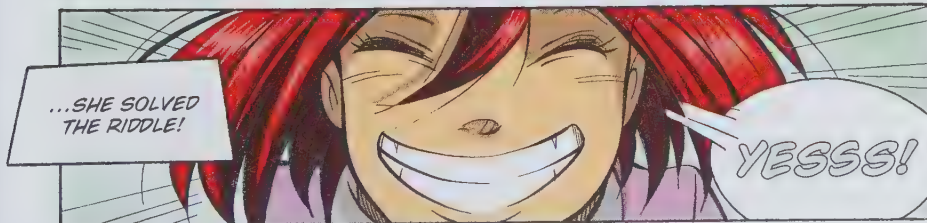
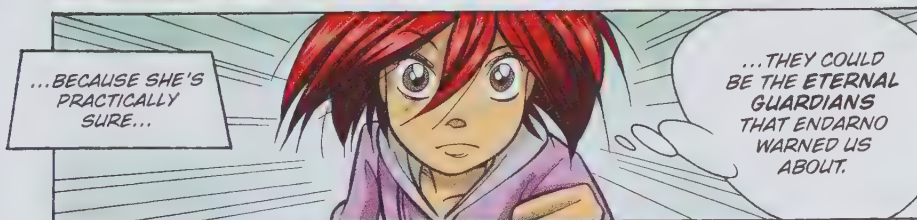
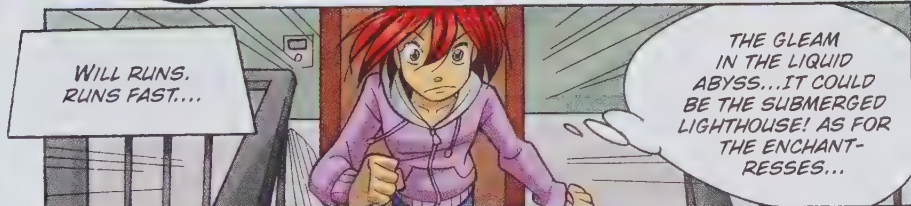
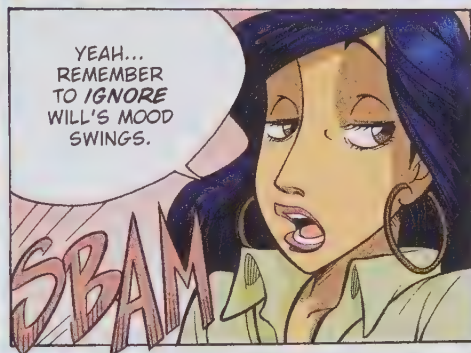
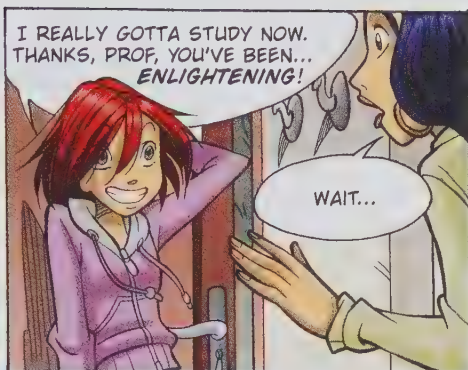
IT WOULD BE
COOL TO FIND OUT
IT STILL WORKS!



THE
GLEAM IN THE
LIQUID ABYSS
LIGHTS UP THE
VOICES OF THE
ENCHANTRESSES...

YOU REALLY
LIKE THIS
POET.





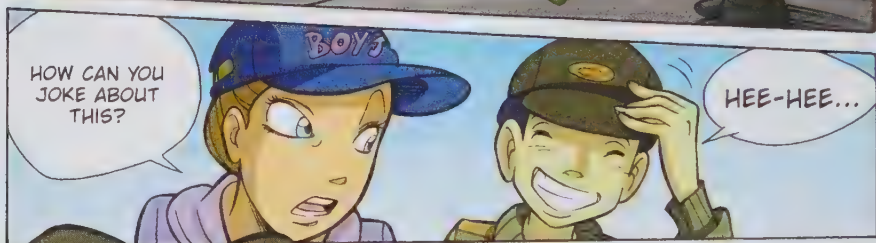
WILL MAY HAVE MADE HER
DISCOVERY, BUT THERE'S
SOMEONE NEAR THE
OLSEN RESIDENCE WHO
CAN'T AFFORD TO
BE DISCOVERED!

AGENT CORNELIA, WE
GOTTA RECOVER TWO
LOUDSPEAKERS. ARE
YOU UP FOR THIS
MISSION?



HOW CAN YOU
JOKE ABOUT
THIS?

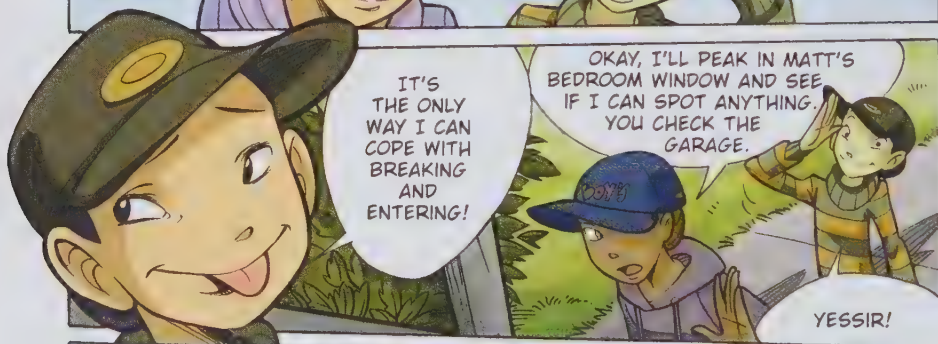
HEE-HEE...



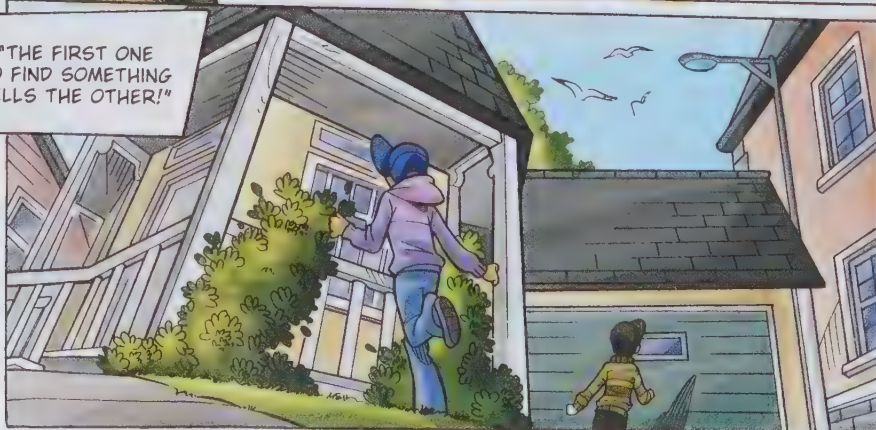
IT'S
THE ONLY
WAY I CAN
COPE WITH
BREAKING
AND
ENTERING!

OKAY, I'LL PEAK IN MATT'S
BEDROOM WINDOW AND SEE
IF I CAN SPOT ANYTHING.
YOU CHECK THE
GARAGE.

YESSIR!



"THE FIRST ONE
TO FIND SOMETHING
TELLS THE OTHER!"





⇒GULP⇒ HOW DO I REACH THAT WINDOW WITHOUT A LITTLE MAGIC?

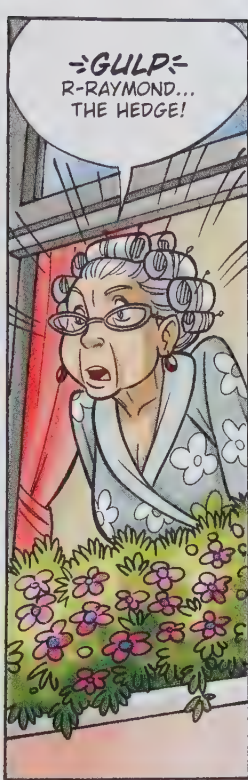


I KNOW WE **SHOULDN'T** USE IT FOR PERSONAL REASONS, BUT WE'RE ON A **MISSION**, AREN'T WE?

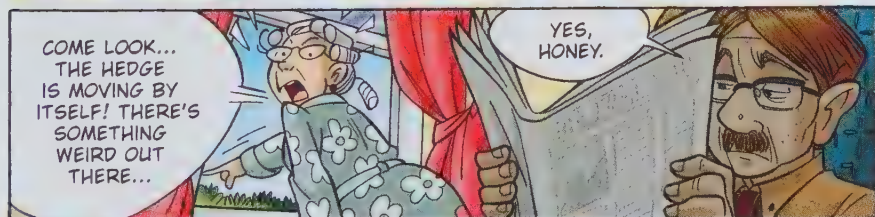
HOW BORING, RAYMOND. NOTHING EVER HAPPENS HERE.

YES, HONEY.

AWIIIN



⇒GULP⇒ R-RAYMOND... THE HEDGE!



COME LOOK... THE HEDGE IS MOVING BY ITSELF! THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD OUT THERE...

YES, HONEY.



RAYMOND, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, PUT THAT NEWSPAPER DOWN!

YES, HONEY.



UM...



NO LOUDSPEAKERS HERE...

CORNY, I FOUND THEM!

YE OLDE
BOOKSHOP.

WHERE ARE
CORNELIA AND
HAY LIN?

WE DON'T
KNOW.

I'VE FIGURED
EVERYTHING
OUT!

BUT WE DO
KNOW CEDRIC IS
BUSY WITH SOME
CUSTOMERS.

WHEN CORNELIA'S
LATE, IT'S USUALLY
BECAUSE SHE'S
DOING HER
HAIR!

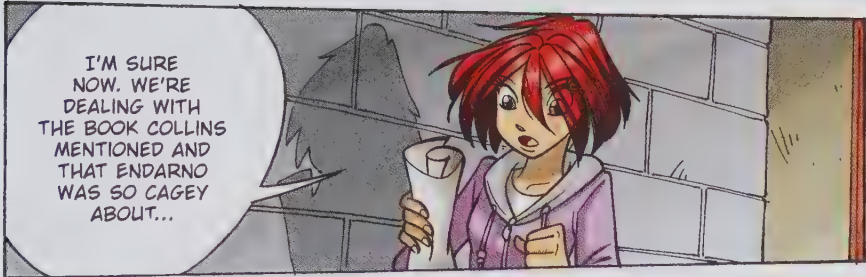
START TALKING.
THEY'LL JOIN
US LATER.

UNLESS
CORNÝ DECIDES
TO DO HER
NAILS TOO...
HEE-HEE!

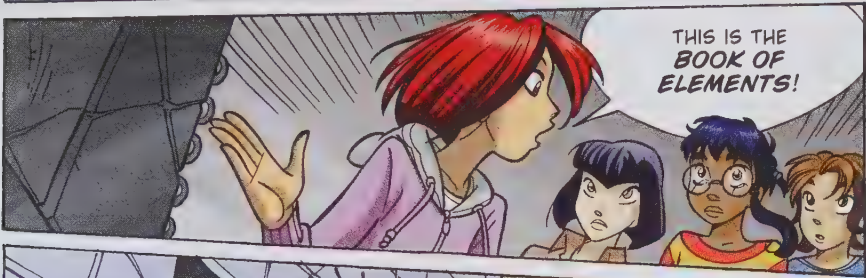
LOOK!

THE RIDDLE
IS ABOUT AN
ISLAND THAT
DOESN'T APPEAR
ON THE MAP...

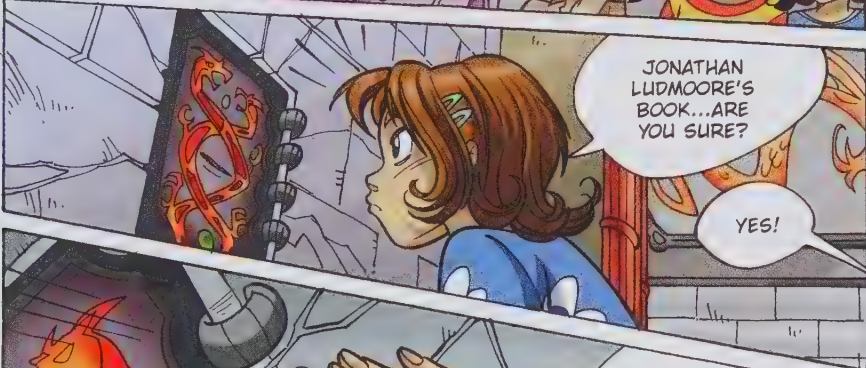
...BUT THAT
DOESN'T
MEAN
IT'S NOT
THERE!



I'M SURE
NOW, WE'RE
DEALING WITH
THE BOOK COLLINS
MENTIONED AND
THAT ENDARNO
WAS SO CAGEY
ABOUT...

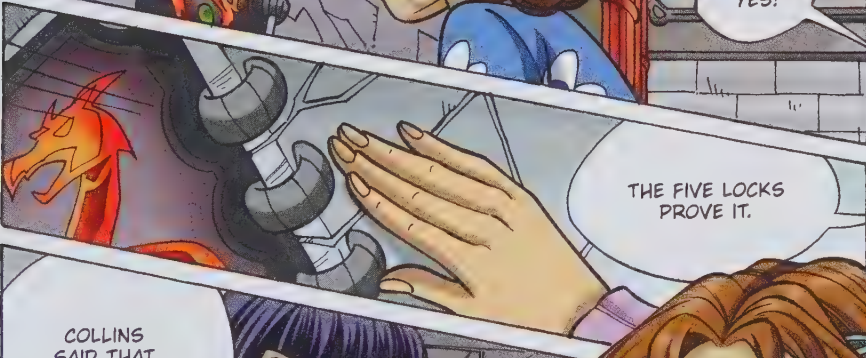


THIS IS THE
**BOOK OF
ELEMENTS!**

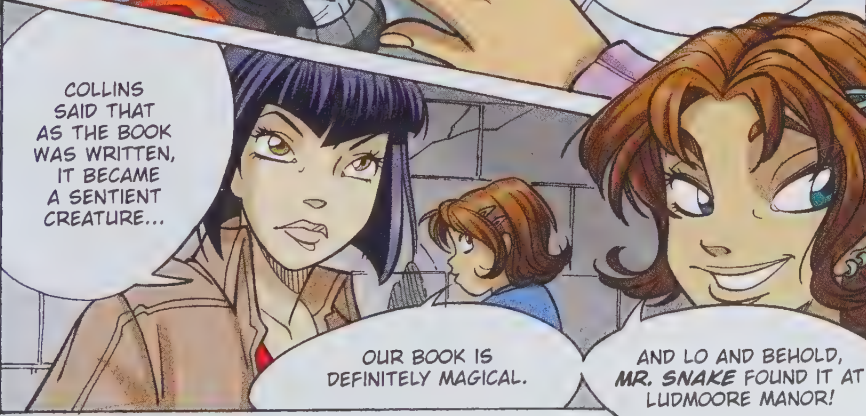


JONATHAN
LUDMOORE'S
BOOK...ARE
YOU SURE?

YES!



THE FIVE LOCKS
PROVE IT.



COLLINS
SAID THAT
AS THE BOOK
WAS WRITTEN,
IT BECAME
A SENTIENT
CREATURE...

OUR BOOK IS
DEFINITELY MAGICAL.

AND LO AND BEHOLD,
MR. SNAKE FOUND IT AT
LUDMOORE MANOR!

SINCE THEY
DIDN'T TELL
US MUCH IN
KANDRAKAR...

...IT'S
CLEAR WE
HAVE TO
HANDLE IT
OURSELVES
THIS TIME.

AND WE GOTTA
RECOVER THE FIVE
STONES OF THE FIVE
ELEMENTS AND PLACE
THEM IN THE BOOK'S
COVER SO WE
CAN OPEN IT.

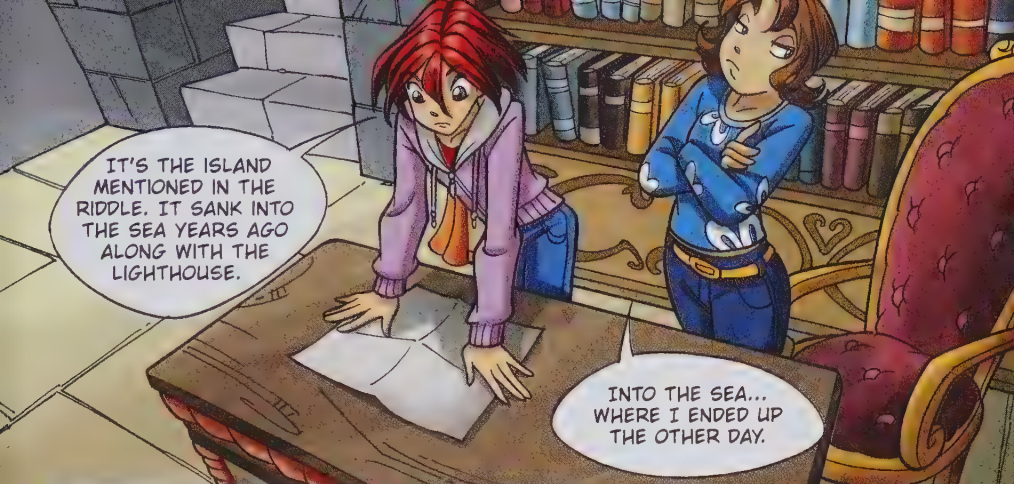
NOW LOOK
AT THE MAP OF
THE PORTALS...

NOTICE WHERE
THE CRACK IN THE
WALL ENDS...

IT POINTS
TO A SMALL
ISLAND.

THAT'S
*SIREN
ISLAND.*

HEY...



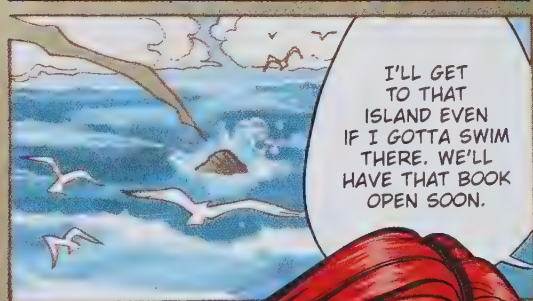
IT'S THE ISLAND
MENTIONED IN THE
RIDDLE. IT SANK INTO
THE SEA YEARS AGO
ALONG WITH THE
LIGHTHOUSE.

INTO THE SEA...
WHERE I ENDED UP
THE OTHER DAY.

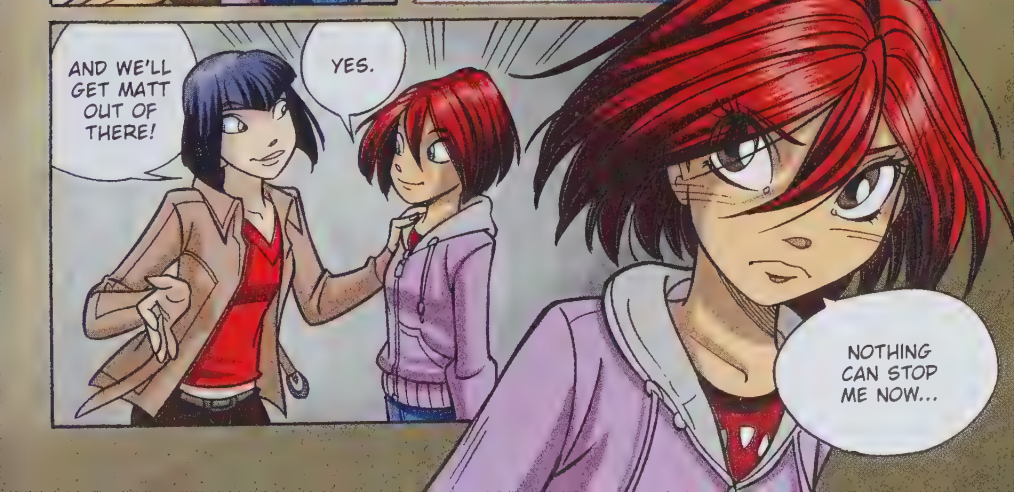


GOOD, IRMA. I SEE YOU'RE
GETTING IT! WE'RE ABOUT TO
RECOVER THE **FIRST STONE**,
CONNECTED TO THE **FIRST**
ELEMENT.

WATER!



I'LL GET
TO THAT
ISLAND EVEN
IF I GOTTA SWIM
THERE. WE'LL
HAVE THAT BOOK
OPEN SOON.



AND WE'LL
GET MATT
OUT OF
THERE!

YES.

NOTHING
CAN STOP
ME NOW...

"...NOTHING AND
NO ONE!"

ANYONE
THERE?

WOW! THERE'S
SO MUCH STUFF
IN HERE.

YEAH. WE'RE
LUCKY TO HAVE
FOUND THE LOUD-
SPEAKERS.

WHAT'S *LUCKY* IS
THAT THE GARAGE
WAS OPEN!

LET ME
SEE!

HA-HA-HA!
I'M DYING...

BABY MATT HAVING
A BATH! THAT WOULD
EVEN MAKE WILL
SMILE.

DO YOU
THINK MATT
IS OKAY?

UM...

HA-HA-HA!
LOOK AT THIS
PHOTO!

"...I HOPE SO!"

COME ON. LET'S
GET WHAT WE CAME
FOR AND GO.

YESSIR!

LET'S TRY
NOT TO FORGET
ANYTHING.

LEAVE IT
TO ME,
CORNY!

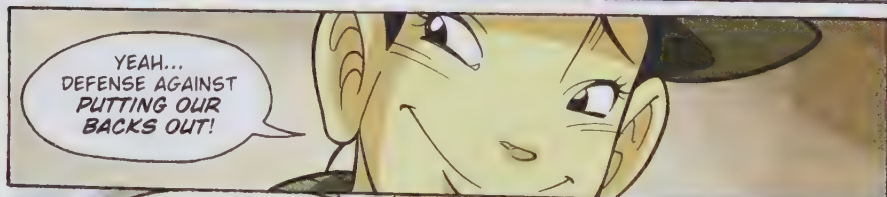
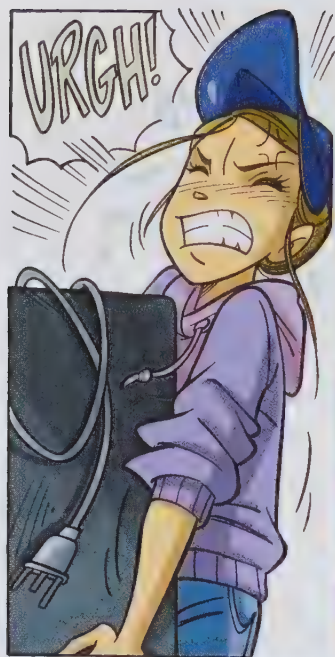
URGH!

URGH!

PANT!
PANT!

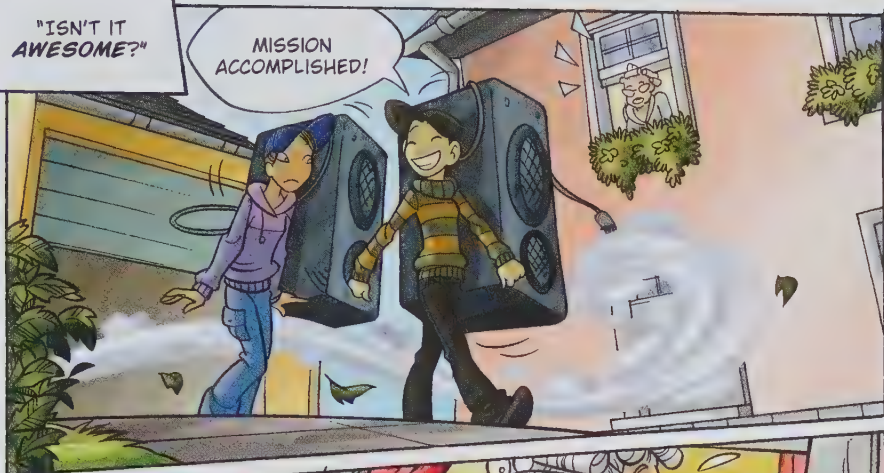
I GIVE UP!

I KEEP
TELLING YOU
TO DO MORE
SPORTS. BIT OF
A **WEAKLING**,
AREN'T YOU?
MOVE OVER...

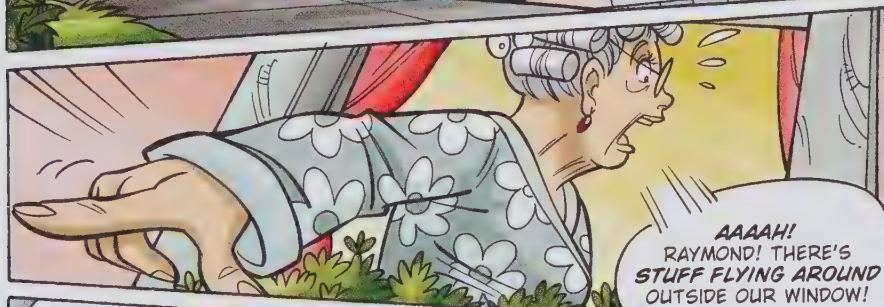


"ISN'T IT
AWESOME?"

MISSION
ACCOMPLISHED!



AAAAH!
RAYMOND! THERE'S
STUFF FLYING AROUND
OUTSIDE OUR WINDOW!



THIS TIME
YOU *HAVE* TO
GET UP AND
COME SEE!

YES,
HONEY!

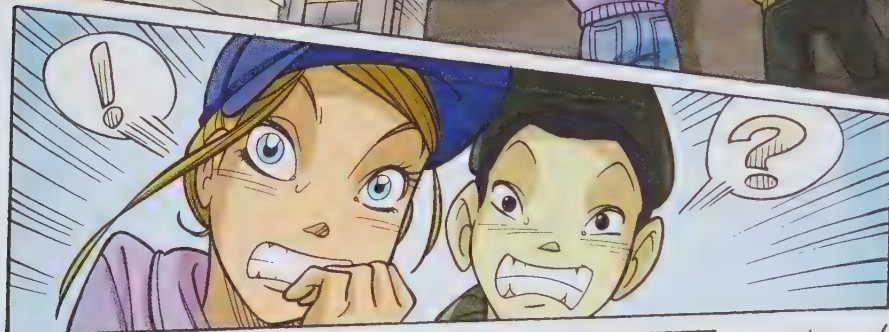


WHAT SHOULD
I BE SEEING,
HONEY?



WE JUST GOTTA
CLOSE THE
GARAGE.





"WHAT NOW?"

It's his
m-mom!

She's
back...

THE END



Read on in Volume 15!

Witch

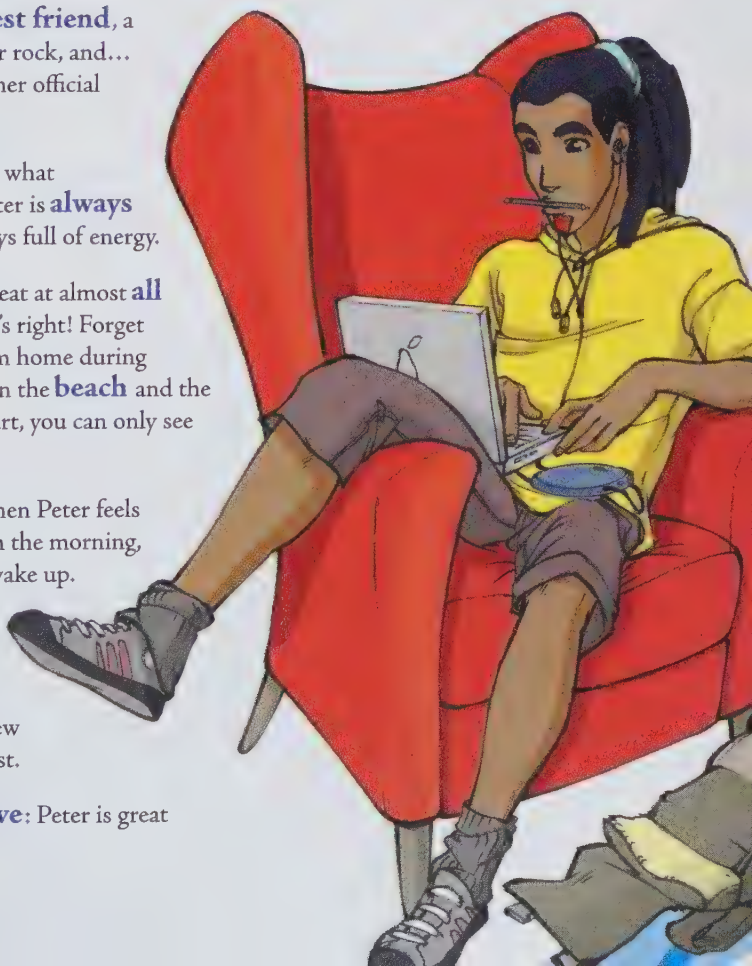
Will Irma Tarance Cornelia Hay Lin



Explore Peter's Room

Taraneer's big brother is friendly, funny, sporty, and absolutely irresistible! Let's explore his room.

- **Positive and cheerful** (and secretly vain), Peter Lancelot Cook is the big brother every girl would love to have!
- He's Taraneer's **best friend**, a precious "ally", her rock, and... sometimes even her official driver!
- He doesn't know what "boredom" is: Peter is **always busy**! And always full of energy.
- He thinks he's great at almost **all sports**...and he's right! Forget about finding him home during summer: Between the **beach** and the **basketball** court, you can only see him at dinner.
- The only time when Peter feels **super lazy** is in the morning, when he has to wake up.
- Peter is a **bottomless well of ideas**: He always has new projects to suggest.
- He's very **creative**: Peter is great at drawing.
- He goes to Heatherfield Art Institute and isn't too fond of studying (but he's super smart). Sometimes, he gets away with it because he's so **cheeky**!



Exploring Peter's Room

Peter proudly displays the trophies he won at the high school basketball tournaments. He's an excellent player (and he loves to brag about it)!

He's also learning to play tennis!

His basket-trash-can is a present from Taranee. When she saw it in the shop, she instantly thought of her big brother. After opening the present, Peter laughed for half an hour.

Peter uses the computer to keep in touch with his friends around the world and check the weather forecast before he goes surfing!



After long negotiations,
his parents bought him
a TV. He watches spy and
action movies, often
with Matt and Joel.



Peter takes
great care of
his surfboard.
He loves the
sea: If he
could, he'd
spend whole
days surfing
the waves!

Photo album and art
books. Peter doesn't
read much, but his
curiosity pushes
him to always try to
better himself. When
he has free time, he
reads while listening
to music.



Part V: The Book of Elements • Volume 2

14

Series Created by Elisabetta Gnone

Comic Art Direction: Alessandro Barbucci, Barbara Canepa

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An Enemy Redeemed?

Running Heatherfield's Ye Olde Bookshop isn't the new life Cedric wanted for himself, but it may have given him the perfect opportunity for revenge! With the Book of Elements and the secrets it contains, Cedric has found the power he needs to finish the Guardians once and for all, but is that what he really wants...?

